

the strengths and synergies of interdisciplinary scholarship. If readers want to hear more, try “Rocking Our Priors.” ■

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#### THE PERSONAL IS POLITICAL: PODCASTING POLITICAL SCIENCE

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Hitting the red “record” button to start the podcast is no different than any other button on a computer screen, but for the first dozen recordings, we were filled with dread. What if the enormous microphone malfunctions or I mistakenly call Dave Hopkins Dan, and

#### *Humor, which is largely absent from most written scholarship—including most blogging—also emerges during conversations with authors.*

Dan Hopkins Dave? Several hundred podcasts later, the dread has been replaced with nervous enjoyment of engaging in deeply personal conversations about remarkable new books in political science.

Academic podcasting fits into a suite of new approaches to sharing knowledge creation, understandings, and research findings, but it has unique strengths compared to blogging, social media, and novel conference formats. The ease of use, inexpensive distribution, and deeply personal nature make it incredibly valuable for the podcaster and listener.

This contribution focuses on our experiences producing and hosting a political science podcast for the last several years un-cleverly called the *New Books in Political Science Podcast* and affiliated with the New Books Network. Our goal—which is shared by all of the podcasts in the New Books Network—is to provide a platform to share the key findings of newly published books in interviews with the author or authors. More than five years in and more than 300 podcasts later, we continue to love the format and the opportunity to connect great work with a growing audience. We eagerly fight among ourselves on Twitter to be the first to invite a guest, as well as the chance to come together to reflect on our favorite books of the year during our year-end wrap-up podcasts in December.

First—and rather interesting in this age of fragmented and often disconnected media—podcasting is a deeply personal medium that shares the intimate qualities of radio but none of the expensive makeup of vlogging. Hearing authors describe their book brings out so many personal aspects of the scholarship and the scholar. What we imagined was the sound of birds chirping outside the window of Julia Azari’s office during one recording remains a blissful podcast memory.

We often ask our authors to explain how they came to the project that has now become a published book, and the responses are fascinating. They often combine particular personal interests, such as travel or social justice, or an experience in the classroom with an academic pursuit. Some of this may be gleaned from a book’s acknowledgments, but it often is a truly intriguing and curious dimension within our podcast conversation, providing an avenue into the substance of the book itself.

Humor, which is largely absent from most written scholarship—including most blogging—also emerges during conversations with authors. During one podcast recording, the author grew so animated and foul mouthed that we had to take a break and begin again with a promise of fewer F-bombs. Whereas we each have our own hosting style—Lilly has the relaxed charm of Jon Stewart and Heath does his best to channel Dick Cavett—most of the time we try to keep the salty language to a minimum and the enthusiasm turned up to 11. To be sure, humor is an aspect of all media, but the aural aspect of podcasting—as opposed to blogging—allows for the audience to hear an author’s laughter, which is a critical way for a guest to relax and the audience to better relate to the topic. Any soon-to-be podcasters should invite laughter; the quality of the podcast and listeners’ enjoyment will soon increase.

Authors often are candid and revealing when they describe the “aha” moment in their research—which might be obvious once the research is completed and the book is written—but for the authors, it was a startling moment of “OMG, now it all makes sense.” Sometimes guests position themselves within the discussion of their work by pointing out ironic experiences. Dan Kapust (2018), at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, once came on the podcast to discuss his book, *Flattery and the History of Political Thought: That Glib and Oily Art*. He regaled the audience with his fascinating research as well as his self-deprecating honesty about student praise for his dubious basketball skills as an example of how flattery works.

Some authors combine academic studies with self-reflection in pursuing their work. One of our first podcasts featured Christina Greer from Fordham University. She described her experience as a first-year college student meeting African students and reflecting on her identity as an African American. Years later, she wrote *Black Ethnicity: Race, Immigration, and the Pursuit of the American Dream* (Greer 2013), an exploration of this same issue with survey data and statistics. In 2019, she launched her own weekly podcast, @FAQNYC.

More recently, Melanee Thomas (University of Calgary) and Amanda Bittner (Memorial University) came on the podcast to

talk about their book, *Mothers and Others: The Role of Parenthood in Politics* (Thomas and Bittner 2017). They related the great irony of how production of the book was complicated by the birth of a child. Even as they were writing and editing a book about motherhood and politics, this personal experience continued to inform the scholarship on parenting and politics. The podcast offered the opportunity to make this connection clear to the audience and deepen the importance of the research.

One of the most attractive aspects of the *New Books in Political Science Podcast* and working with the New Books Network is that it really is not that difficult to do. The technology and know-how needed to produce a podcast takes little time to master. Trying to schedule across multiple time zones can be one of the more complicated aspects of the podcasting process. Needless to say, we have each forgotten to hit “record” and faced the unpleasant consequence of needing to request a re-record with internationally renowned scholars. They have always been amazingly gracious and understanding, and it happens less today than in the earliest days of the podcast. Of course, there was the time that the FedEx delivery person rang the doorbell and the dog started barking in the midst of a three-way podcast; thankfully, it was edited out by the good folks who run the New Books Network. Now we simply make sure to ask our authors to keep their pets in another room during the recording.

Technology allows for wide and inexpensive distribution of podcasts to a global audience. It allows the audience to connect with authors and ideas in ways that, in the past, often required a significant travel budget so that political scientists could attend all of the conferences they desired and meet scholars to discuss their work face to face. For scholars outside of the United States and Europe, this problem is magnified. Podcasting does not eliminate this issue, but our podcast does offer a way to learn about new books and to hear about the work itself for little or no direct expense.

In these past five years, it has been the technology that has changed the most—and for the better. In the early days, we used the clunky recording options in Skype. Much of the time, that meant holding our breath, hoping that the internet connection did not cut out, and then erasing half of an excellent conversation. Today, the recording software is more reliable and most guests have a digital microphone to improve sound quality.

We love our blogging colleagues and accept every invitation to write a guest post at the *Monkey Cage*, *Mischiefs of Factions*, *A House Divided*, or other fantastic political science blogs. Podcasting complements the innovations associated with blogging. It also is an avenue, like blogs, to reach an audience that includes our colleagues in the profession but reaches beyond the boundaries of the discipline. It is an opportunity for us and other podcasters to publicize and personalize excellent research. It requires minimal training and few expenditures. The result is a useful contribution to the growing diversity of ways to share political science research and knowledge creation with a wide and eager audience. ■

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## IN DEFENSE OF THE LONG, LONG INTERVIEW

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One of the main virtues, in my view, of the podcast medium is that it can accommodate 60- to 90-minute interviews because listeners like me need stimulation during dull commutes and tedious workouts. Nevertheless, a common reaction to my podcast, *The Political Theory Review*, is “Do the conversations have to be *that* long?” “Yes” tends to be my answer because, as discussed herein, I think long-form conversations benefit authors and the discipline—and also could be a good teaching tool.

Like other podcasts, *The Political Theory Review* consists of conversations with authors about their new books—in particular, books about political theory and social and political philosophy. In these conversations, we discuss the main argument of the book and its broader significance and application, and we work through the evidence that the author marshals in support of the overall claim.

If you have written an academic book, you are accustomed to the usual publishing process. You spend 5–10 years painstakingly researching a topic, writing each chapter with care and rigor, proof-reading closely, and then...very little response: a handful of book reviews, perhaps an “Author Meets Critics” panel, or—if you are very lucky—a 30-second interview on the local NPR station. This response is dissatisfying because authors yearn to have the deep, probing engagement over the work they spend so much effort crafting.

The first benefit of a long podcast then—and the reason I began mine—is for the authors. There are several good books published every month in my field and others, and they deserve close attention. The authors I interview consistently express gratitude for closely reading their work and engaging them at length—refreshingly unlike the typical practice in academic life and the short-attention-span media of radio and television.

The second benefit is for the discipline. The audience for most academic podcasts, including mine, is mostly fellow academics. Some (e.g., EconTalk) reach a much broader audience, which is another virtue of the podcast medium. Yet, there is a benefit of the niche podcast for the narrow discipline that is their subject. In most fields, divisions often exist—for example, in my field, political theory, critical-theory scholars rarely engage with analytic-political philosophers. Scholars fail to reach across the divide in part because, in our specialized disciplines, we do not read others’ work and therefore do not know the intricacies of their arguments. Indeed, for my 50th episode, I invited two authors, Jeanne Morefield and Ryan Hanley—who have very different backgrounds and approaches—to talk to one another about “What Is Political Theory?”

Thus far, I have interviewed more than 50 scholars across the diverse field of political theory. The long-form conversation affords the time to delve deeply into the argument and background assumptions of each book. This gives the academic audience a fuller understanding of the work produced in their field. My hope is that doing so engenders many more connections that can be drawn across the discipline, bridging the divides and inspiring listeners by ideas from authors whose books they might never have considered reading.

The third benefit is for teaching. Many “innovative-teaching” suggestions involve incorporating podcasts or electronic media to supplement classroom learning. The problem with these suggestions is that there often is little suitable content to supplement classroom work. In my podcast and others like it,