Research Cluster Examines the Politics of the Current Economic Crisis

“The Politics of Economic Crisis,” a three-year research cluster that focuses on distributive implications of the current crisis and the politics of crisis management, was launched in early spring with a conference at Princeton that brought together economists, historians, and political scientists from leading American and European institutions. The principal investigators and coordinators of the initiative are Larry Bartels, the Donald E. Stokes Professor of Public and International Affairs, and Jonas Pontusson, professor of politics, both at Princeton University, and Nancy Bermeo, the Nuffield Professor of Comparative Politics at the University of Oxford.

According to Pontusson, the breadth and depth of the current global economic downturn has analysts reaching back to the Great Depression for appropriate analogies. “While the crisis is unlikely to approach the Great Depression in magnitude or duration, it has already generated substantial economic dislocation and major realignments of public policy debates in most of the rich industrial democracies,” says Pontusson. The first wave of bailouts and stimulus efforts has passed, he notes, and “even more significant economic and political reforms seem likely to follow.”

Supported by PIIRS, the research cluster focuses on exploring and explaining how various democratic political systems respond to the current economic crisis. The investigation seeks to account for similarities and differences in the policies adopted by different countries and to trace the economic and political effects of those policies. The principal investigators are especially interested in examining inequality as a potential explanation for differences in policy and as a potential outcome of differences in policy; examining the role of public opinion and elections in shaping policy responses to the crisis; and building an interdisciplinary dialogue among history, economics, and other social sciences.

“Many conferences and research projects on the economic crisis are currently being planned,” says Pontusson, acknowledging pressing and wide-ranging interest in the global economic situation. “The distinctive contribution” of the Princeton-based research cluster, he says, “will be to link the policies of crisis management and the political fallout of the crisis to the politics of inequality and redistribution.”

The principal investigators are political scientists with strongly overlapping scholarly interests but largely distinct professional networks and expertise. Their ambition is to build an international and interdisciplinary network of scholars interested in the politics of the economic crisis. Scholars will convene at Princeton and at Oxford for conferences, seminars, and colloquia that will explore government responses to the crisis; the implications of the crisis for varieties of capitalism; and the implications of the crisis for public attitudes, political participation, and partisan politics. The spring conference at Princeton, “Comparative Responses to the Economic Crisis in Advanced Industrial States,” was held on March 27–28.

The second year of the project, 2010–11, is a residence year for professors Bartels, Bermeo, and Pontusson. During this phase, the professors will work on an edited volume, pursue their own research, and host short-term visitors for a biweekly colloquium, in addition to convening a conference and interdisciplinary seminars.

The third phase of the cluster, 2011–12, will be a year of conferences and public scholarship.

This is precisely the kind of collaboration PIIRS Director Katherine Newman envisioned when establishing the research cluster initiative. “Through this program, PIIRS is able to draw together Princeton’s most distinguished scholars to consider problems of real-world importance for a long enough period to make genuine headway,” she says. “I am particularly enthusiastic about this cluster since it will grapple with the variable responses countries have offered to a common crisis, one that affects millions of people worldwide.”
The 2010 Global Seminars are:

**China:** “Diversity of China: History, Culture, and Globalization,” Shanghai and Xi’an, June 20–July 31. This course presents an interdisciplinary introduction to contemporary China and its traditions. Ping Wang (Princeton, East Asian studies) and Chungling Li (Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, sociology).

**Ghana and England:** “The African American Atlantic: Modernity and the Black Experience,” Accra and London, June 20–July 31. This seminar offers students the opportunity to understand how the Atlantic Ocean is recognized as the conduit through which Africans encountered the modern world and set out to redefine the nature of modern identity itself. Simon Gikandi (Princeton, English).

**India:** “Religion and Politics in Indian Art and Architecture,” Goa and Madurai, June 4–July 17. This course examines architectural stylistic developments and the emergence of new ideas produced under Islamic and European rule. Mallica Kumbera Landrus (Brown University and Rhode Island School of Design) and Esther da Costa Meyer (Princeton, art and archaeology).

**South Korea:** “Dreaming, Mapping, Living: The City in the Korean Imagination,” Seoul, June 20–July 31. This course traces the transformations of Korean cities from the late Chosón period through the early years of the 21st century. Joy Kim (Princeton, East Asian studies) and Steven Chung (Princeton, East Asian studies).

**Turkey:** “Islam, Empire, and Modernity: Turkey from the Caliphs to the 21st Century,” Cairo and Istanbul, June 12–July 24. This course, presented for the third year, provides an analysis of change and continuity in Turkish society with a focus on history and major cultural transformations. M. Şükrü Hanioglu (Princeton, Near Eastern studies) and Erika Gilson (Princeton, Near Eastern studies).

**Vietnam:** “Vietnam: The War and Beyond,” Hanoi, June 13–July 24. This seminar examines the causes and consequences of the “American War,” as it is known in Vietnam. David Leheny (Princeton, East Asian studies) and Christina Schwenkel (University of California–Riverside, anthropology).

The Global Seminars are sponsored by PIIRS in conjunction with the Office of International Programs.

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**2011 Global Seminar Preview**

PIIRS is currently working with faculty directors and the Office of International Programs to finalize details for the 2011 Global Seminars. Courses to be offered are as follows:

**Germany**

**Ireland**
“From the Troubles to the Celtic Tiger: Nationalism and Immigration in Modern and Contemporary Irish Theater and Performance.” Jill Dolan (Princeton, English) and Stacy Wolf (Princeton, theater).

**Italy and Czech Republic**

**Japan**
“Zen and Performance.” Thomas Hare (Princeton, comparative literature).

**Lebanon and Syria**
“Identity and Politics in Lebanon and Syria.” Bernard Haykel (Princeton, Near Eastern studies) and John Waterbury (American University of Beirut, president emeritus).

**Turkey**
It Takes a Campus: Program in African Studies

As the West African proverb “It takes a village to raise a child” implies, at Princeton, the Program in African Studies (AFS) is the sum of many parts. With courses taught by faculty from across the four divisions of academia—the humanities, arts, social sciences, and sciences—and funding from PIIRS, the Department of Ecology and Environmental Biology (EEB), and the Princeton Environmental Institute (PEI), the Program in African Studies fulfills its mission to engage the campus community in Africa and provide opportunities for students to study abroad.

The multidisciplinary program begins with an introductory course (AFS 200) that enables all of the University’s departments to showcase their link to the continent with topics as varied as conservation, biodiversity, health and disease, and literature; it ends with a senior colloquium, where students share their thesis work in progress. In between, AFS sponsors and endorses a wide range of courses, seminars, and field study programs enabling students in any department to design a course of study.

“We work hard to interest undergraduates in Africa,” says AFS Director Daniel Rubenstein, through what he sees as a two-step endeavor. “We first engage them on campus and then provide opportunities for study abroad so that they connect with Africa on a personal level.” Rubenstein is also chair of EEB and the Class of 1877 Professor of Zoology.

Funding from PIIRS, he says, ensures AFS is stable on campus. It supports initiatives that enable AFS to encourage curricular innovation, produce events, and assist the undergraduate and graduate student organizations Akwaaba and Thingira. In 2009–10, the program offered courses by M. Lamine Sagna, who lectures on African development and globalization, and Rachel Beatty Riedl, a PIIRS postdoctoral fellow whose research focuses on institutional development in new democracies.

Funding from other sources—including EEB and PEI—“provides outreach to encourage students to go to Africa,” says Rubenstein. Providing opportunities so that students can “become engaged in Africa in a firsthand, experiential way” is a key feature of the program, he explains. Long-established programs include Tropical Biology in Kenya, a semester-long program held each spring funded and administered by EEB, and Princeton in Dar es Salaam, a summer language study-abroad program in Tanzania sponsored by the Office of International Programs and administered by PIIRS.

In addition to courses for credit, outside-the-classroom opportunities for students are supported by PEI through Princeton’s Grand Challenges initiative, which addresses complex global issues through interdisciplinary teaching and research. Internships are available to students interested in working in Africa.

“The internships are like seeds,” says Rubenstein, who is director of the Development Grand Challenge. “If watered well, they will create a desire to go back to Africa and begin some scholarly investigation that will culminate in their senior thesis and meet the certificate requirements of AFS.”

This year, AFS has funded internships that will permit two students to stay on in Tanzania at the conclusion of Princeton in Dar es Salaam. That program is directed by Mahiri Mwita, a lecturer in comparative literature. It is also sending four Swahili speakers to work with Aldin Mutembei, a former visitor to Princeton and now a lecturer at the University of Dar es Salaam, whose research focuses on factors affecting behavioral adjustments in the HIV/AIDS crisis.

Princeton faculty doing research in Africa also provide opportunities for undergraduates as well as graduate students to assist with fieldwork. For example, three EEB rising seniors will travel to Kenya to work on Princeton’s Water, Savannas, and Society project. The students will examine wildlife and livestock feedback on plants to help fine-tune models developed by the team’s ecologists.

Other ongoing faculty projects that involve undergraduates include designing a solar electrified refrigeration unit that can transport medicine by camel to remote regions (Winston Soboyejo, professor of mechanical and aerospace engineering, principal investigator [PI]) and building a technical high school that has aquaculture and technology as its main themes in a community that overfished its river and became impoverished (Carolyn Rouse, professor of anthropology, PI).

“We also work hard to engage the faculty,” says Rubenstein. “Everyone has to give something to get something—like teach a new course in exchange for funding. That funding may bring in an undergraduate to assist with research. AFS fits with Princeton’s mission of combining teaching and research for a unique undergraduate experience. Everyone on campus benefits from that.”

Fourteen seniors are slated to receive undergraduate certificates this spring, a number that has held steady over the last few years, and more than 20 undergraduate and graduate students worked or studied in Africa through AFS in 2009–10.
Beissinger Named PIIRS Acting Director; Newman Departs Princeton

Professor of Politics Mark Beissinger will take the helm of PIIRS as acting director when Director Katherine Newman leaves Princeton this summer to become the dean of arts and sciences at Johns Hopkins University. Beissinger’s main fields of interest are nationalism, imperialism, revolutions, and social movements, with reference to the Soviet Union and the post-Soviet states.

In announcing the appointment, Newman said, “Mark Beissinger has had extensive experience developing and managing international research and teaching programs at the University of Wisconsin.

His experiences will be a boon to PIIRS.”

Beissinger is the author and editor of numerous publications including the award-winning book Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State (2002). His recent writings focus on topics such as the persistence of empire in Eurasia, the spread of colored revolutions in the post-communist world, and the relationship between ethnic nationalism and democratization. His research has been supported by the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, the National Science Foundation, the United States Institute for Peace, and the Ford, Rockefeller, and Olin foundations.

Before joining the Princeton faculty in 2006, Beissinger was a professor of political science at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. At Wisconsin he founded the Center for Russia, East Europe, and Central Asia, a U.S. Department of Education Title VI National Resource Center, and was chair of Wisconsin’s political science department. He has also served as president of the American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies. Beissinger received his Ph.D. from Harvard University.

PIIRS Grant Yields Book on Indian-Pakistani Activism

A book on Indian and Pakistani civil society activism and people-to-people initiatives for peace in the region, Bridging Partition: People’s Initiatives for Peace between India and Pakistan, was published in January 2010. The volume, edited by the late Smitu Kothari and Zia Mian with Kamla Bhasin, A. H. Nayyar, and Mohammad Tahseen, brings to fruition a project that began with grants from PIIRS and the Woodrow Wilson School in 2004.

Kothari, a lecturer at the Woodrow Wilson School from 1996 through 2007, and Mian, director of the Woodrow Wilson School’s Project on Peace and Security in South Asia, received funding to support the project that included a workshop held in Lahore, Pakistan, and a volume of papers. In addition to their South Asian collaborators, Kothari and Mian recruited Princeton undergraduate and graduate students to work with them. The students, Ananya Chakravarti ’05, James Loxton ’06, Deepa Das ’06, Diya Nair (M.P.A. ’05), Dawn Hewett (M.P.A. ’05), Leo Coleman *08, and Prema Singh (Ph.D. candidate), researched and wrote papers on different aspects of civil society and initiatives for fostering peace and cooperation in South Asia.

The book was launched at a major India-Pakistan conference, organized by a coalition of NGOs, think tanks, and grassroots groups, held in Delhi. It is currently in its second printing.

Ruth Metzel ’10 has been selected to receive the prestigious Henry Richardson Labouisse ’26 Prize for 2009–10. Administered by PIIRS to support postgraduate work, research, or study, the $25,000 prize will fund Metzel’s work as a staff member of the Azuero Earth Project (AEP), an NGO dedicated to conserving biodiversity on the Azuero peninsula in Panama.

Metzel’s interest in the region developed when she studied abroad on the ecology and environmental biology–sponsored semester in Panama in spring 2008. She met AEP Board President Edwina von Gal and Vernon Scholey, director of the Achotines Laboratory (a field station of the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission), through one of her courses and was inspired by their work.

The Azuero peninsula, Metzel explains, has been used for cattle ranching and agriculture for centuries. The people who work the land range from cattle barons to subsistence farmers. A recent trend to develop the coast for tourism is pushing the cost of property out of reach for many and putting pressure on the existing ecology. The AEP, she says, is working to preserve the ecosystem of the peninsula, protect its biodiversity, and promote sustainable development by being a resource for information for farmers, ranchers, and developers.

“When I heard Edwina speak about [AEP’s] vision for the peninsula and the opportunity for economic development to be coupled with environmental sustainability ... I got really interested,” says Metzel. “I wanted my [senior] thesis to contribute to [their] efforts to develop a cohesive conservation strategy for the peninsula.”

Her thesis about forest conservation on the peninsula began with a graphic information system project estimating the area’s current forest coverage. The Labouisse prize will support Metzel as she expands her thesis by using the map she is creating to designate priority areas for conservation and environmental education. This undertaking will include mapping forest-cover change and surveying local landowners on past, current, and projected land-use practices. The funding also enables her to assist AEP Executive Director Omar Lopez in producing events and educational activities in this, the organization’s first operational year.

“I am very excited about this opportunity,” says Metzel. “It is a wonderful chance to translate the conclusions of my senior thesis, written in an academic setting, into practical environmental solutions.”

Metzel, who grew up in northern Virginia, will live and work at the AEP offices in Pedasí, Los Santos. Her year there begins in September 2010; when it ends, she plans to enroll in a graduate program in environmental management and/or international development.

The Labouisse prize enables a graduating senior to engage in a project that exemplifies the spirit of Henry Richardson Labouisse’s life and works. Labouisse was a diplomat and international public servant who championed the causes of international justice and international development. During his long diplomatic career, Labouisse not only designed policies aimed at rebuilding war-torn and crisis-ridden societies around the globe but also played a leading role in implementing those policies, beginning in post–World War II Europe.

The Labouisse prize was established by his daughter and son-in-law, Anne and Martin Peretz, in 1984.
CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER 2010

Exploratory Seminars Application Deadline. September 27. For information, go to www.princeton.edu/piirs/seminars.

PIIRS/CSR/Luce Foundation Speaker Series. Organized by Rafaela Dancygier (politics/WWS), Amaney Jamal (politics), and Mirjam Kunkler (Near Eastern studies). The speaker series will continue through the 2010–11 academic year. For information, go to www.princeton.edu/~piirs/projects/luce.html.

OCTOBER 2010


NOVEMBER 2010

2011 Global Seminars Information Session. Details TBA.

Exploratory Seminars Application Deadline. November 2. For information, go to www.princeton.edu/piirs/seminars.

Advanced Seminars Application Deadline. November 2. For information, go to www.princeton.edu/piirs/seminars.