

Editor's Note

THE VIEW FROM SOUTH LAWN

On September 24, 2007, the literal view from South Lawn was a large projector screen displaying Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as he gave a controversial speech as part of the Columbia University World Leaders Forum. President Lee C. Bollinger introduced Ahmadinejad with a stinging denunciation, decrying the Iranian leader's denial of the Holocaust and other tendentious statements. The ensuing free speech debate quickly overshadowed the event itself and brought to mind the Helvidius Group's namesake, Helvidius Priscus, who is known as the first martyr for free speech. We were pleased to witness the passionate discussion of academic freedom that quickly spread throughout the university community, irrespective of the divergent views on both presidents' remarks. As we seek to provide a forum for undergraduate discussion of equally important issues, the view from South Lawn has never been clearer.

This year, the *Journal of Politics & Society* departs from its traditional political science focus to include several articles emphasizing its *& Society* aspect. In accordance with its interdisciplinary mission, the nineteenth edition of the *Journal* features seven essays on a wide range of social science topics. Shahryar Minhas discusses the economic implications of Scottish separatist movements, and Miguel Lopez explores the relationship between regime type and nuclear strategy. From a sociological perspective, Michelle Steward discusses the implications of Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, while Patrick Johnson—the first international author to be published in the *Journal*—details the peculiar role of conspiracy theories in Italian public discourse. Two papers investigate contemporary China: Tedde Tsang, et al. research mate selection preferences among urban Chinese youth, and Diana Xiaojie Zhou assesses the HIV/AIDS epidemic in rural China. Additionally, this year's guest essay is adapted from comments made by Louise Arbour, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, on the occasion of the presentation of the MacArthur Award for International Justice to Kofi Annan.

Thanks to a generous gift from the Helvidius Group's founder, Peter Tomassi, and his wife Katherine, the best essay in each year's *Journal of Politics & Society* will henceforth be known as the Peter and Katherine Tomassi Essay. We are pleased to present this year's winning article by Irit Rasooly of Princeton University. In her work on anthropological assessments of medical intervention, Rasooly challenges conventional assumptions about the role of culture in the medical community. She does this while presenting readers with her own challenge, asking how professionals and researchers have failed to empower the individuals they purport to benefit.

Through this year's selections, the Editorial Board has chosen scholarship that reflects the same exacting spirit. The essays in this volume of the *Journal* represent novel contributions to academic discourse, and we look forward to reading the expanded modes of inquiry they will no doubt produce.

In 2007, the *Journal of Politics & Society* made history by becoming the nation's first commercially distributed undergraduate periodical, and we are proud to continue our presence in bookstores nationwide. For those of you who are reading the *Journal* for the first time, welcome! We hope you enjoy this year's contribution to the undergraduate discourse on the critical issues of our time.

Jacob Weaver
Editor-in-Chief

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