

# **PROPOSAL**

for an

## **ANNUAL CONFERENCE FOR A NEW POLITICAL SCIENCE**

submitted to the

Caucus for a New Political Science  
Coordinating Council and  
Publications Executive Committee

by

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The following proposal is a concept paper aimed at stimulating discussion about whether the Caucus for a New Political Science (CNPS) should convene an annual conference for a new political science. The details of the proposal are meant to be illustrative of key ideas, since such a proposal, if adopted, will no doubt go through many iterations and modifications of detail.

A major purpose of the proposed conference would be to promote the growth of the Caucus outside, but parallel to the American Political Science Association (APSA). The proposed Conference is not intended to compete with, or to supplant, participation in the APSA Annual Meeting, nor is it aimed at replacing the NPS program at the APSA convention. Many other Organized Sections have comparable conference outlets, whether in Women's Studies, International Studies, Latin American Studies, European Studies, etc. In the past, particularly in the mid- and late- 1970s, the CNPS made numerous efforts to expand its role beyond the APSA by sponsoring local chapters and regional mini-conferences, an annual "June Conference" of the Assembly, and a major conference at Brown University (1975), while also attempting to institutionalize a CNPS presence at regional political science association meetings (e.g., the Northeastern, Western, and Mid-Western Political Science Associations).

The timeline for the proposal, if approved in principle by the Coordinating Council and Publications Executive Committee, at the 2008 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, would be for the 2008 business meeting to approve the idea in principle, and to appoint an ad hoc study sub-committee to further refine the proposal. A final proposal could be approved at the 2009 business meeting, with the first CNPS conference convened in the winter or spring of 2011.

## I. PURPOSES OF THE CONFERENCE FOR A NEW POLITICAL SCIENCE

- to promote a fundamental redefinition of the purposes, categories, and politics of political science
  - this is one of the original purposes of the Caucus for a New Political Science, but:
  - 8 to 11 panels out of 1,300 at the APSA Annual Meeting does not significantly promote accomplish this objective,
  - the CNPS no longer has any members on the APSA Executive Council or the APSR Editorial Board, nor is it likely to achieve such representation without a vigorous electoral mobilization comparable to the early 1970s.
- to expand political science into a genuinely interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary form of scholarship
  - this is one of the original purposes of the Caucus for a New Political Science, but:
  - instead of promoting genuinely interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary scholarship, the APSA system of organized panels actually re-fragments scholars and scholarship back into isolated communities of narrow specialization (e.g., political history, political economy, politics and literature, political communications, politics and biology, etc.), rather than promoting discussion across disciplines and promoting the integration of inter-disciplinary concepts and methods into the fabric of political science.
  - the CNPS should actively encourage scholars from “other disciplines” to directly join the CNPS and to participate in its annual conference, listserv, etc.
- to promote the development of political science as an international and global discipline beyond the categories and purposes of the American Political Science Association:
  - The APSA is a nationally based professional association that promotes a concept of the political science discipline that is distinctively “American” (see Bernard Crick’s *The American Science of Politics*) and, as such, wedded to a defense and rationalization of the American state, its foreign and domestic policies, and its political institutions.

- the CNPS should strengthen its relations with international and transnational social science associations, including more active participation in the International Political Science Association.
- the CNPS should actively encourage scholars who reside in other countries to directly join the CNPS and to participate in its annual conference, listserv, and governance.
- to promote political science as engaged political action
  - the APSA promotes a concept of value-free social science and a definition of apolitical “professionalism” that is a distinct product of the discipline’s development in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, including academic repression, but it is not an inherent characteristic of the social sciences. The CNPS emerged intellectually from its members’ critique of the myth of value free social science and the APSA’s concept of apolitical professionalism.
    - The Preamble of the CNPS Constitution states that:
 

The Caucus for a New Political Science was formed to make the study of politics relevant to the struggle for a better world. As an educational organization, it offers a forum to diverse positions within the framework of this struggle. At the same time, it recognizes that political study and criticism, if it is to be effective, must ultimately transcend the barriers of professionalism and become a function of the community as a whole.
  - the proposed CNPS conference would not only incorporate this critique into its academic presentations, but attempt to incorporate presentations by progressive elected officials, political journalists, and political activists.
  - the CNPS should actively encourage non-academics, such as progressive elected officials, journalists, and activists to directly join the CNPS and to participate in its annual conference, listserv, etc.
- to promote the growth of the Caucus for a New Political Science outside the Organized Section framework of the APSA:
  - In 1975, the *Report of the CNPS Committee on Structure* established the “dual identity” of the Caucus in its conclusion that: “Caucus members are organizationally dependent on the APSA on the one hand and therefore have critical tasks to do within the APSA (such as transformation of the *American Political Science Review*, democratization of APSA, extension of services

and /new guidelines for Departments), but the Caucus is also an 'independent entity' with important new work to do outside the APSA that includes serious internal education and mass political education." [This report was generated from discussions held during a 1975 "June Conference," held at Bowdoin College, consisting of 40 members of the Assembly].

- The Caucus was incorporated as a non-profit 501(3)(c) corporation to institutionalize this independent existence.
  - As a follow up, the CNPS sponsored its own conference in November 1975, held at Brown University, with the theme: "Socialist Perspectives on Social Change in the United States." This was the first large conference organized by the CNPS and independent of the organized panels convened at APSA meetings. Papers were delivered by 45 scholars, but the conference was attended "by hundreds" of scholars and students.
  - In 1979, the journal *New Political Science* was established (and is owned) by the 501(3)(c) to further institutionalize this independent existence.
  - The Caucus has lost its momentum in this direction since becoming an Organized Section in 1991.
- to increase the manuscript pipeline to *New Political Science*
  - to allow a second face-to-face meeting each year of the Coordinating Council
  - to provide additional professional opportunities to progressive young scholars, while providing opportunities to senior scholars, who are more interested in substantive presentations and discussions than in adding one more line to their curriculum vitas.
- the NPS Organized Section has one of the highest panel and paper rejection rates in the APSA. There is clearly an unmet demand for additional professional outlets for conference papers.

## II. STRUCTURE OF THE CONFERENCE

The conference could be annual, biennial, or triennial, but this proposal is based on an annual conference.

### A. Coordination and Convening:

There are at least two possible ways to select individuals to coordinate and convene the conference with minimal change to the existing structure of the NPS Constitution:

1. the prior year's APSA Program Chair could ex-officio serve as the Conference Convener in the subsequent year (e.g., the 2009 APSA Program Chair would organize the 2011 NPS Conference).
2. create a new 2-year elected position of Conference Convener, who would be elected at the annual business meeting
3. the Convener could appoint "sub-chairs" to review and accept panels and papers within the various sub-fields of new political science.
4. Two possible ways of redefining the sub-fields of political science (these are only illustrative suggestions):

#### By Structures of Capitalism

Capitalism  
Globalization  
The State  
Social Class  
Race and Ethnicity  
Gender  
Social Movements  
Ideology

#### By Disciplinary Intersections

Political Economy  
Political Sociology  
Political History  
Political Anthropology  
Political Communications  
Political Geography  
Political Culture

### B. Conference Structure:

The Conference should be designed to promote genuine intellectual exchange and to provide individuals with an opportunity for serious discussion and debate as opposed to cursory presentations and limited discussion opportunities provided by the APSA Meeting structure. It should also facilitate the conduct of official NPS business in a more timely manner.

1. Initially a 2 ½ day Conference beginning with meetings of the Coordinating Council (and Publications Executive Committee?) followed by an evening dinner and

keynote address, preferably by a “political” or “public” figure, rather than a prominent academic:

a. Day 1 (illustrative purposes only):

3:00 pm Coordinating Council

6:00 pm Dinner and Keynote Address (other?)

b. Day 2 and 3: 2-hour panels from 10am-6pm (10am-12noon, 1:30pm-3:30pm, 4:00pm-6:00pm)

- limit each panel to 3 papers (25 minute presentations ) + 1 discussant (15 minute presentation); discussant serves as panel chair
- this arrangement leaves at least 30 minutes for discussion at the end of the panel

c. Start with 4 panels in each time slot = 24 total panels = 72 panelists + 24 chairs = 96 maximum presenters/discussants

d. The conference schedule should also incorporate practical short courses (e.g., media relations) and practical organizing-oriented short courses

e. Limit each participant to no more than 1 paper and 1 discussant position.

f. Redefine the categories and sub-fields of political science (see below)

2. Date: February, March, or June (date could affect location and costs).

3. Location – an annual conference that rotates location on a 3-year basis (predicated on a winter/spring date) (Note: need to avoid the winter schoolbreak in the northeast):

a. Caribbean islands (Cuba, Puerto Rico, Bahamas, Dominican Republic, Jamaica)

b. Mexico East (Vera Cruz, Cancun)

c. Mexico West (Cabo, Ensenada, etc.)

g. First year emphasize recruitment and advertising in U.S., Canada, Europe, Mexico, and the Caribbean

4. Potential Conflict with Other Progressive Conferences
  - a. Radical Historians Organization (inside AHA, December/January)
  - b. Left Forum
  - c. Union of Radical Political Economists (annual Summer Conference about August 10-11 and sponsors panels at EEA, ASSA).
  - d. How Class Works Conference (biennial, June) (co-sponsor/joint conference? always held at SUNY - Stonybrook)
  - e. Historical Materialism Conference (annual in December).
  - f. Allied Social Science Associations (first week of January – includes AEA).
  - g. Social Science History Association (first week of October).
  - h. Association for Evolutionary Economics (meets at ASSA, first week of January).
5. Announcement and Publicity
  - a. NPS listserv and listservs of related organizations
  - b. advertising exchange with progressive journals (e.g., Historical Materialism, Rethinking Marxism, Capitalism, Nature and Society, Capital and Class, New Left Review, and others).
  - c. NPS website
  - d. Other national political science associations
  - e. Other
6. Establish a Press Office for the Conference to Promote Press Coverage of Papers, Panels, etc.
7. Costs (illustrative purposes only):
  - a. Provide R.A. to Conference Convener
  - b. Provide Airfare and Hotel for Conference Convener
  - c. Visit to Potential Hotel Sites for review
  - d. Keynote Speaker + Honoraria
  - e. Advertising
  - f. Conference Space Rental, etc.

8. Revenues:

- a. Registration fee + Opening Dinner Charge
- b. CNPS subsidy (basic costs + scholarships)
- c. Sponsorships, (e.g, publishers; members' universities, departments, centers)
- d. Foundation assistance
- e. Fee waivers for graduate students
- f. UNESCO
- g. Advertisements in Conference Program
- h. Other