

APSA Renames APSA Best Book Award for Merze Tate and Elinor Ostrom

During its Spring 2023 Council Meeting, the APSA Council voted to rename the APSA Best Book Award the Merze Tate-Elinor Ostrom Outstanding Book Award. The Tate-Ostrom Award honors the best book on government, politics, or international affairs, and it is named after Dr. Merze Tate and Dr. Elinor Ostrom, two leading political scientists.

ABOUT MERZE TATE

[Merze Tate](#) (1905-1996) was the first African American woman to earn a bachelor's and doctoral degree from Oxford University in international relations (1935) and the first African American woman to earn a doctoral degree in government and international relations from Radcliffe College (1941). Her numerous books on the topic of international relations were widely used by scholars and the US Government. Dr. Tate's second book, *The United States and Armaments* (Harvard University Press, 1948), shaped important US policy relating to disarmament. During [her career](#) she advised and consulted with the US State Department to help guide international strategy. Dr. Tate also served as a UNESCO Representative (1948), a Fulbright Scholar in India (1950-1951), and a specialist in disarmament for numerous US Presidents. She traveled worldwide and was fluent in five languages.

Along with her impressive career in international policy, Dr. Tate was also an [avid scholar and teacher](#). She was passionate about civic engagement and was one of two women faculty in Howard University's Department of History, where she taught for 33 years before retiring. Prior to joining the faculty at Howard University, Dr. Tate taught political science and history at Morgan State University among other institutions. Her legacy lives on through her groundbreaking scholarship and generous \$1 million gift to her alma mater [Western Michigan University](#) (formerly Western Michigan Teachers College) which established the Merze Tate Student Education Endowment Fund, and where a college is named in her honor.

ABOUT ELINOR OSTROM

[Elinor Ostrom](#) (1933-2012) earned a PhD from UCLA in political science in 1965. She went on to spend the majority of her career at Indiana University where she co-founded and co-lead the Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis with her husband, Vincent Ostrom. A faculty member in the Political Science Department and the School of Public and Environmental Affairs, Dr. Ostrom studied the intersection of economics and political science. Her research and scholarship on [institutional analysis](#) and common pool resources [earned her a Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences](#) (2009), becoming the first woman Nobel Laureate in that category. Dr.

Ostrom was also the first woman to receive the Woodrow Wilson Foundation Award.

Her book, *Governing the Commons* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), is renowned for challenging previously held notions on collective property, natural resources, and sustainability. Her research had far-reaching effects on environmental protection, economics, and political science. Along with her remarkable scholarly career, Dr. Ostrom served on numerous advisory boards and was the founding director of the Center for the Study of Institutions, Population, and Environmental Change at Indiana University. She served as president of APSA from 1996-1997, where her presidential task force addressed the importance of civic education. Dr. Ostrom also advised the US Agency on International Development and the US Advisory Committee on Intergovernmental Relations, among other groups.

CONCLUSION

Dr. Tate and Dr. Ostrom contributed invaluable research and scholarship to the discipline of political science and beyond while facing prejudice and challenges relating to gender and race. Both women worked tirelessly to advance educational and professional opportunities for students and faculty – particularly scholars of color and women in the disciplines of political science, history, and economics. In choosing to name the award after these two women, the committee noted, "their scholarship embraces a wide range of substance and methodologies [and] they exemplify excellence in our discipline." APSA is proud to name the award in their honor. ■

The APSA Best Book Award, originally known as the Woodrow Wilson Foundation Award, was presented for the first time in 1947 (initially sponsored by the Woodrow Wilson Foundation). Following the Foundation's name change in 2020, and after a series of APSA council discussions about Woodrow Wilson's role in ordering the segregation of the federal workforce and civil service, in 2021 and 2022, APSA decided to present the APSA Best Book Award in lieu of the Woodrow Wilson Award. During that time, the APSA Council also approved the creation of an ad-hoc committee to determine a new name for the award. In 2023, after a council vote, APSA officially announced that the APSA Best Book Award had been renamed the Merze Tate-Elinor Ostrom Outstanding Book Award.