

Gulliver's Interview*

George E. Connor, *Southwest Missouri State University*

Dr. Foster: At the outset, I'd like to clarify the requirements of this one-year replacement adjunct-lecturer position as specified in the American Political Science Association's *Personnel Service Newsletter*. The primary responsibility involves teaching our Senior Seminar, PLS 666, which is more commonly referred to as the department "capstone" course. Other duties would include teaching as many sections of American Government as we can fill, sponsoring the Model UN program, and coordinating the university's intramural sports and recycling activities.

Dr. Gulliver: Given the current job market and my long hiatus from political science, I feel compelled to entertain all such reasonable conditions of employment.

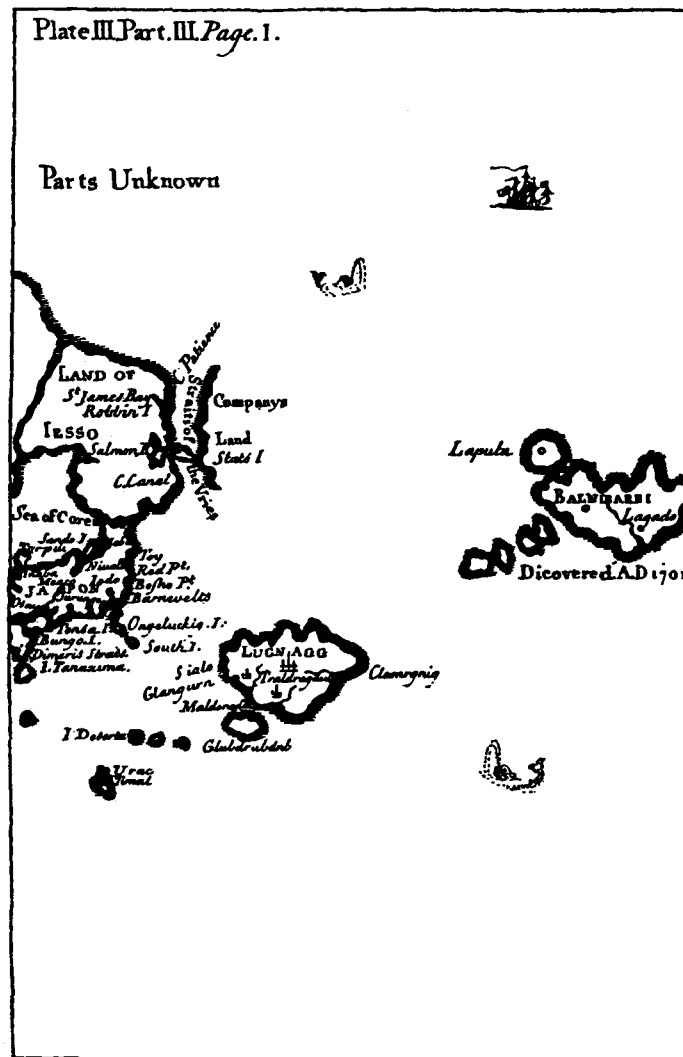
Dr. Foster: Dr. Gulliver, I feel that with all candor I must tell you that although our affirmative action officer considers fictional characters a protected class, many of us on the search committee have doubts about the ability of an eighteenth-century fairy-tale protagonist to teach the political science capstone course. This is especially true given your misanthropic writing sample, *Gulliver's Travels* (Swift 1970), which I assume we will be referring to parenthetically throughout this interview.

Dr. Gulliver: I appreciate your candor and I can appreciate your misgivings. I must admit that having reflected upon the absurdity of such a "Project as reforming the Yahoo race," I foreswore "all such visionary Schemes for ever" (VII). Upon reconsideration of the matter I now avow to undertake the Project anew, albeit with a small, distinct subset of Yahoo, namely Political Science majors enrolled in the so-called Capstone Course, or senior seminar.

Dr. Foster: Although capstone courses were universally adopted across the discipline after the APSA

Task Force recommendation and their objectives are widely acknowledged and accepted, perhaps I should begin by outlining the three basic objectives of our seminar. First, we are naturally concerned with the measurement, or assessment, of the amount and type of particularized knowledge retained by our students across major subfields. Here we are attempting to "assess and evaluate . . . the range and quality of [our] department's curriculum" (Kahn 1992, 3). Speaking for the committee and not the university, of course, we are concerned with

knowledge for knowledge's sake and have only a modest interest in "nationally normed" examinations or the funding that results from such measures. Second, because we do not want to simply "purvey factual information," our majors must maximize their "capacity to analyze and interpret the significance and dynamics of political events and governmental processes." To accomplish this goal, our seminar is "aimed specifically at integrating what students have learned, by focusing on problems cutting across all or most subjects studied" (Wahlke 1991, 49, 55).



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With this end in mind, our capstone course emphasizes the recognition of "the interconnectedness among political science fields," identification of "the relationship between the philosophical foundations of political science and normative and empirical inquiry," and the introduction of "new sets of scholarly literature and their integration." Taken together, the measurement of particularized knowledge and assessment of critical thinking, will foster our third objective of developing "the individual student's skills of self-criticism" (Kahn 1992, 3).

Dr. Gulliver: Guilty of many Sins, and more Vices, the political science Yahoos are, in my estimation, most susceptible to compartmentalization. What Knowledge they do retain can only be extracted with vigorous force. Forceful extraction of particularized knowledge makes the integration of that knowledge all the more troublesome. I see my role, in this Regard, as not unlike the Flapper in Laputa. The Laputans could neither "speak, or attend to the Discourses of others, without being roused by some external Taction upon the Organs of Speech and Hearing" (132). Given the Opportunity, I would utilize my own Book of Travels as the external Taction to rouse the students to the integration of knowledge and self-examination. In one slim, easy to comprehend Volume, students are afforded the Opportunity to examine the interconnectedness of the subfields and evaluate the relationship between normative and empirical approaches; all in the form of new scholarly literature to which these Yahoos have not been exposed.

Dr. Foster: That is all well and good Doctor, but you were trained as a physician and have a modicum of knowledge with respect to seamanship. How would you, for instance, use your book to teach political philosophy?

Dr. Gulliver: It would be most immodest for me to say so, but some would consider my travels as dealing with the central aspect of political study. That is to say "it is a discus-

sion of human nature, particularly of political man."¹

Dr. Foster: Yes, yes, but what about the differences between ancient and modern philosophy, for instance?

Dr. Gulliver: For specific Instruction in Philosophy, I would return with the capstone students to Glubbudrib and recount the appearance of Homer and Aristotle, both, "perfect strangers" to their Commentators (168). These Yahoos can be further Enlightened by the contrast between the renowned Aristotle and "preposterous" Descartes as well as the inclusion of the modern Sir Thomas More in the "Sextumvirate" of Ancients (167). Of even greater Utility in this regard is my conventional presence in Lilliput as opposed to my unconventional presence in Brobdingnag. To insure that these Yahoo flowers Bloom, I would illustrate, by my own words and deeds, the differences betwixt the Houyhnhnms, "wholly governed by Reason" (238), and their Yahoo servants' "wants and passions" (209) as further evidence of the difference between Ancients and Moderns.

Dr. Foster: Moving on to less theoretical grounds, Dr. Gulliver how could you use your travels to encourage a discussion within the subfield of public administration such as on the history of the spoils system and the development of civil service? General discussion aside, what relevance can be found in your travels for specifics like the Pendleton or Hatch Acts?

Dr. Gulliver: I must admit I have always been Perplexed by the notion of Merit. I am still unable to explain the Brobdingnagian King's profession "to abominate and despise all Mystery, Refinement, and Intrigue, either in a Prince or a Minister" (111). Equally absurd was the administrative Experiment suggested by one Academy of Lagado political Projector for choosing "Favourites upon the Score of their Wisdom, Capacity and Virtue" (159–60), which was illustrated by the dismissal of Lord Munodi (148). I suppose I would be forced to contrast truly Excellent principles of merit such as

Rope Dancing and the Tryal of Dexterity in Lilliput (21–22) with the supposed "merits" of civil service. Here a Minister cuts "a Caper on a strait Rope" or leaps and creeps over a stick and is rightly rewarded. Also easily contrasted to Exams of Merit is the simple procedure of applying poison to the dust of the throne room in Luggnagg (175). In this instance, those who "receive an audience" are not permitted "to spit or wipe their Mouths in his Majesty's presence." Rather than promoted to their level of incompetence, Ministers out of Favor, or Enemies of the Court simply perish. Moreover, I can think of no more useful discussion of Merit than my own Discourse on the "Methods by which a Man may rise to be Chief Minister" where excellence in "Insolence, Lying, and Bribery" is identified (222).

Dr. Foster: What about science? Can you facilitate our students' acceptance of political science as a scientific discipline? As you yourself have stated, they are prone to compartmentalize.

Dr. Gulliver: What better way to integrate scientific Knowledge than by further examples from the Academy at Lagado? The excellence of the scientific method is manifest in projects for extracting sunbeams from cucumbers, distinguishing paint Color by feel and smell, and reducing "human Excrement to its original Food" (153). Those few Yahoos interested in the further pursuit of scientific Knowledge would do well to review the Academy's "Practice of begging from all who go to see them" (153). These Yahoos, a very few Granted, must further be advised to learn a second language, Jargon, exemplified by the Academy description of the Laputan Loadstone (142) and the precise language of the Mariner (64). With respect to Political Science in particular, utilizing my own travels as a Sample, would enable the Capstone Yahoo to avoid the Brobdingnagian Defect of "not having hitherto reduced Politicks into a Science" and confining Politics to "common sense and Reason" (111).

Dr. Foster: Clearly there is more to your travels than meets the eye. But surely you do not claim expertise in political institutions such as parties, legislatures, executives, and courts.

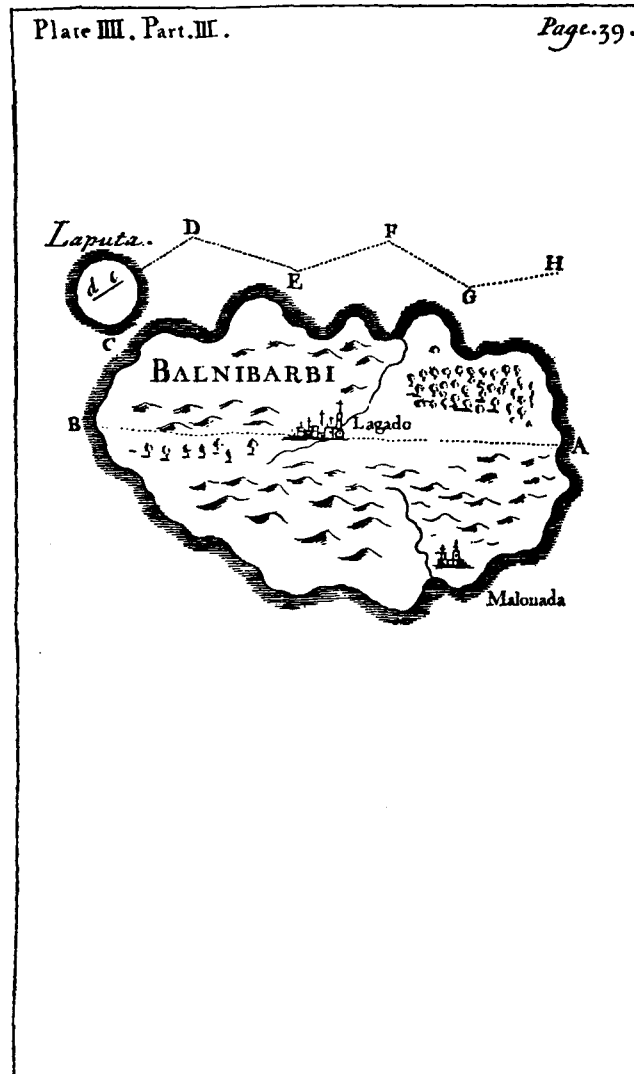
Dr. Gulliver: The Academy also suggests Inspiration for those who seek Knowledge about these things. For example, the Projectors there, contend that the Mischief of Faction can be dissipated by placing the Occiputs of Party leaders “within the Space of one skull” (161) and Plots and Conspiracies are discovered by watching “suspected Persons” and the Hand “with which they wiped their Posteriors” (162).

Dr. Foster: Fine, fine, we would all like to cure the mischiefs of faction but do your travels have anything to offer about theories of representation or candidate recruitment?

Dr. Gulliver: The Sorcerer of Glubbubdrib provided a Comparison of ancient and modern Legislatures which yielded neither Delegate nor Trustee. It did suggest that the former was made up mostly of “Heroes and Demy-Gods” while the most common occupational qualifications for the latter were “Peddlar, Pick-pocket, Highwayman, and Bul-lie” (167). The virtues of this Congress reconsidered, like that of my own country, are plainly “Ignorance, Idleness, and Vice” (108). With respect to the objects of legislative Deliberation, the Houyhnhnm assembly inquired “into the State and Condition” of the districts and provided for any Want therein. Moreover, the Grand Assembly offers an unsurpassed example of mature Debate as in the question of “Whether the Yahoos should be exterminated from the Face of the Earth” (236).

Dr. Foster: And with respect to executives or heads of state?

Dr. Gulliver: Yahoos with either High or Low self-esteem who study Presidential Personality would do well to Actively study Golbasto of Lilliput (25), the King of Brobdingnag (103 ff.), Munodi of Balnibarbi (148–150), and Traldragdubh of Luggnagg (175). Beyond personality, Golbasto and the Emperor of Ble-



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fuscu offer starkly contrasting examples of the role of Chief Diplomat. The King of Laputa offers an exemplary model of a Chief of State (133). Most perplexing, however, is the Brobdingnagian King who has disdain for War yet maintains an Army. How a chief Commander establishes the “strictest Duty” under such circumstances is difficult to comprehend (114).

Dr. Foster: Dr. Gulliver you failed to mention courts or criminal justice. As you know, many of our majors are drawn to the study of political science because it is without peer in preparation for the study of law.

Dr. Gulliver: Of course what you say is true, but you must admit that

many of your pre-Law Yahoos reject Reason for the Lure of Law wherein they pursue Arts that prove “White is Black and Black is White” rather than acknowledge that Law and its study “was intended for every Man’s Preservation.” While Reason ought to be a “sufficient guide,” these Yahoos “pretend to Reason” and this Pretense further adds to the difficulty of discussing the various Methods of dealing with criminals such as the death Penalty in Lilliput (39) and Brobdingnag (96). Furthermore, as potential “[e]nemies of all Knowledge and Learning” (217), these Yahoos are not so well-constituted and I, as yet, would be hesitant to advance the subjects of the Free Press (145) or the Division of Church and

State (41, 91, 128), although they and other similarly mundane notions are discussed in my Book of Travels.

Dr. Foster: Dr. Gulliver, I must warn you that questioning the motives of our students will not be looked upon with favor. What do you have to say about methods of judicial selection or theories of judicial behavior?

Dr. Gulliver: As lawyers "studiously avoid entering into the Merits of the Cause" and Judges "lie under the fatal Necessity of favouring Fraud, Perjury and Oppression" (216), it seems to me that spending time discussing so-called Legal Reasoning and Decision Rules, such as Standing and Mootness, engenders no Case and much Controversy.

Dr. Foster: Ah, yes. Perhaps we should move on to a less sensitive subject. Would you say that your travels offer insight into international affairs? More specifically, can you speak authoritatively on relations between nations and international organizations?

Dr. Gulliver: The same pretension of Reason which leads to difficulty in domestic legal affairs leads to difficulty in Affairs of State. This is easily demonstrated by the Houyhnhnm reaction to the history of European Wars and the eternal Variance of rich, proud nations and poor, hungry nations (212–14). Followers of the Natural Law, these Houyhnhnm's trot through life ignorant of what states do in a Positivistic world. In a similar fashion, the Rebellion of Lindalino against Laputan rule serves to illustrate both the limits of colonial relations as well as the extent of a subjugated People's desire for freedom (144). Internal convulsions, or Civil Wars, are likewise noted to arise from the "Nobility often contending for Power, the People for Liberty, and the King for absolute Dominion" (114). The Big-Endian Schism and my own role in the War between Lilliput and Blefuscu offers insight into Bilateral relationships (31). While certain Defects of Isolationism are readily apparent in the Brobdingnagian King's seclusion "from the rest of the World" (109),

the efficacy of the Balance of Power between these Nations obviously forecloses the need for any International organization.

Dr. Foster: Given the number of worlds you discuss in your Book of Travels, I suppose you are well versed in the nuances of comparative government.

Dr. Gulliver: Those Yahoos who seek to Compare all things can be well-served by my own comparisons of Political Institutions noted above. Much further Consideration, however, could be give to Political Culture, as proposed by your prophet Daniel. The "intense Speculation" (133) of the Laputans is readily contrasted with the excellence in Mathematics and "Perfection in Mechanicks" of the Lilliputians (10). Both of these differ sharply from the defective Learning of the Brobdingnagians, "consisting only in Morality, History, Poetry and Mathematicks" (111) and the principal Houyhnhnm virtues of "Friendship and Benevolence" (234). As for Class structure, one can easily divine a clear relationship between Rank and Rancor in my adopted homes. In Lilliput, those of "Eminent Birth" were distinguished from "ordinary Gentlemen" (42); both which in turn were distinguished from the "meaner Sort" and "Cottagers and Labourers" (43). Most fascinating was the Houyhnhnms, who divided their society along lines of Colour: White, Sorrel, Iron-grey, Bay, Dapple-grey, and Black (223). Since my return to England I have especially reflected on "how vain an Attempt it is for a Man to endeavour doing himself Honour among those who are out of all Degree of Equality or Comparison with him" (100). As for further comparative Yahoo Edification, one could also compare methods of Education, relations between the Sexes, the impact of Religion, and notions of Economy among the Lands I visited.

Dr. Foster: Thank you Dr. Gulliver. We would appreciate it if you could provide some letters of recommendation.

Dr. Gulliver: "Having few friends," and my "Good Master Bates dying" (4), I only have this short Epistle from my Cousin and publisher.

My "ancient and intimate Friend" (VIII), one Lemuel Gulliver, is seeking to use his Book of Travels for the purpose of educating Political Science Yahoos. As I saw fit to say before, I see fit to say again: It is a Work fit "to the general Capacity of Readers" (IX). Moreover, for these Capstone Yahoos it most definitely offers "a better Entertainment than the common Scribbles of Politicks" (VIII).

Richard Sympson

Dr. Foster: Thank you Dr. Gulliver. The committee will keep you posted as to the progress of our search.

Notes

* The author gratefully appreciates the comments and suggestions of anonymous referees and thanks John Danford for the original inspiration.

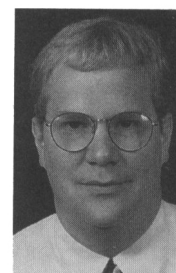
1. Allan Bloom (1970, 298) said it, but a proper citation would ruin the pun below.

References

- Bloom, Allan. 1970. "An Outline of Gulliver's Travels." In *Gulliver's Travels*, Jonathan Swift. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Kahn, Ronald. 1992. "Capstone Courses and Experiences in Undergraduate Political Science Curricula." *Political Science Course Syllabi Collection*. Washington, DC: American Political Science Association.
- Swift, Jonathan. 1970. *Gulliver's Travels*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Wahlke, John C. 1991. "Liberal Learning and the Political Science Major." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 24(1):148–60.

About the Author

George E. Connor is an assistant professor of political science at Southwest Missouri State University where he teaches, among other things, Senior Seminar. Although he has dabbled with some success in legislative studies, his primary area of interest is American political thought. In 1995 he was awarded a NEH Study Grant to pursue his analysis of American political thought in American fiction.



'98 Annual Meeting Sessions on...

Teaching, Learning and Updating Current Topics for Undergraduate Courses*

Conference for Chairs, Professional Day

Political Science Undergraduate Enrollments and Majors, An Update	Wednesday 8:45am
Assessing Political Science Programs and Faculty	Wednesday 10:45am
Advising MA Students on Career Opportunities and Choices"	Thursday 1:30pm

Comparative Politics and International Relations

12-13 Local Government Capacity in Developing Countries	Thursday 10:45am
12-14 Community Influence on Local-Level Politics in Developing Countries	Thursday 3:30pm
16-10 Formulating Questions in International Relations	Thursday 3:30pm
12-26 Interactions Between Political and Economic Reform in Korea and East Asia	Thursday 3:30pm
12-9 Community and Development II	Friday 8:45am
12-22 Civil Society and Political Change in the Middle East	Friday 8:45am
14-22 Party Competition and Voter Mobilization	Friday 10:45am
12-7 Legislatures in Latin America	Friday 3:30pm
13-14 Do Leaders Make a Difference? A Look at Russia's Regions	Saturday 8:45am
12-11 Historical Dynamics of Transitions to Democracy	Saturday 8:45am
12-15 Varieties of Civicness and Social Capital	Saturday 8:45am
12-8 Community and Development I	Saturday 10:45am
12-3 Explaining Economic Performance in Developing Countries I	Saturday 3:30pm
12-4 Explaining Economic Performance in Developing Countries II	Sunday 8:45am
12-16 Transnational Communities and Domestic Politics	Sunday 10:45am
12-18 Managing Differences in Developing Countries	Sunday 10:45am

Sessions on Teaching and Citizenship

10-10 Innovative Pedagogies in the Political Science Classroom	Thursday 10:45am
10-4 Creating Communities of Learning in Political Science Classrooms	Friday 8:45am
10-1 Learning about Communities and Politics through Community Based Experiences: Pedagogical Reflections from the Field	Friday 3:30pm
10-2 Civic Education: Theory and Practice	Friday 10:45am
9-5 Web Applications in Introductory U.S. Government Courses	Friday 10:45am
10-5 Innovative and Virtual Learning Communities in Teaching Political Science	Saturday 1:30pm
9-10 Roundtable on Issues and Controversies in Using Student Evaluations in Teaching	Saturday 1:30pm
10-6 HyperPolitics: Using Hypertext for Developing and Teaching Key Concepts in Political Science	Friday 3:30pm
10-7 Transformational Politics in the Classroom	Sunday 8:45am

American Politics and Government

22-12 New Perspectives on the US Senate	Thursday 8:45am
22-13 Causes and Consequences of Legislative Gridlock	Friday 10:45am
22-15 Foundations of Representation	Friday 10:45am
25-10 Looking at the Policy Process from Both Ends	Friday 10:45am
5-8 Roundtable on Presidential Leadership and the National Conversation on Race: Lecture, Dialogue, or Soliloquy	Friday 1:30pm
24-7 Roundtable on the Status and Future of Public Administration	Friday 3:30pm
9-7 The Introduction to American Politics: Core Concepts and Objectives (Co-sponsored by the Task Force on Civic Education)	Saturday 10:45am
22-2 Empirical Approaches to Congressional History	Saturday 1:30pm
9-8 Building Learning Communities Across Cultures	Saturday 3:30pm
22-5 Dynamics of Committee Politics	Saturday 3:30pm
10-9 Roundtable on Washington Semesters as Pioneer Campus and Community Builders	Saturday 10:45am
23-6 The President as Legislative Leader	Sunday 8:45am
22-7 New Perspectives on Legislative Leadership	Sunday 8:45am
10-8 Case Teaching in Gender and Global Politics	Sunday 10:45am
29-1 State Politics and Social Policies	Sunday 10:45am

Political Philosophy and Democratic Theory

2-23 Politics in the Circumstances of Modernity	Thursday 8:45am
1-6 Roundtable on Leo Strauss, the Straussians and the American Founding	Thursday 8:45am
2-4 Democracy and Forms of Rhetoric	Thursday 1:30pm
1-2 Roundtable on James P. Young's "Reconsidering American Liberalism: the Troubled Odyssey of the Liberal Ideal"	Thursday 3:30pm
1-7 Enlightenment versus Liberalism	Friday 8:45am
1-4 Contemporary Aristotelian Contributions to the Problem of Community in Liberal Societies	Saturday 8:45am
2-5 Roundtable on Political Community, Public Reason, and Deep Diversity	Saturday 3:30pm
3-10 Roundtable on Citizenship, Nationality and Globalization	Saturday 3:30pm
2-15 Roundtable on Ideological Communities and Political Contexts	Sunday 8:45pm

* This is a brief overview highlighting sessions, mostly, roundtables, which feature presentations given by political scientists, public officials and journalists on current political, policy and theoretical issues of broad interest. Many other 1998 Annual meeting sessions address core topics on politics and government, such as: the presidency, the 105th Congress, voting behavior, regional and national politics.

Please also visit the Poster Session on Teaching and Learning in Political Science on Friday, Sept. 4 at 3:30pm.