

Centennial Center Winter Grants

SEAN DELEHANTY | ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, CENTENNIAL CENTER

This January, as part of the Centennial Center's annual Winter Grants competition, APSA awarded four grants totaling \$62,415 to projects that will forge new connections between Political Scientists, students, and communities. APSA's Winter Grants are composed of three separate grant programs: Growing Democracy, Research Partnerships on Critical Issues, and Peer-to-Peer Pedagogical Partnerships.

The Growing Democracy grant is awarded to teams of political scientists who seek to partner with community organizations to provide expertise to community members and strengthen democratic society. Research Partnerships on Critical Issues Grants are awarded to diverse, interdisciplinary teams of scholars, policy experts, and public activists who are committed to cutting through polarized or stagnant debate on a pressing public policy challenge by offering a re-

search-backed solution to some of the most difficult challenges facing societies. The Peer-to-Peer Pedagogical Partnership grant brings together political science educators at research universities, liberal arts and teaching colleges, and community colleges to create innovative and engaging teaching resources.

APSA's support of these four projects represents part of the Association's commitment to supporting civic engagement work on the part of our members. As always, we are deeply impressed by our members' creativity and dedication to producing world-class research that will benefit not only the profession, but also civil society.

Below you can find a brief description of each of our four grant winners as well as a summary of their projects. APSA's Winter Grants are made possible by a generous donation from the Ivywood Foundation.

GROWING DEMOCRACY GRANT

"MappCivics. Youth Empowering in Chicago" is led by [Dr. Magda Giurcanu](#), an assistant professor at [National Louis University](#), and Edwina Hamilton from the Peace & Justice Center at [BUILD, Inc., Chicago](#). The PIs represent an interdisciplinary team of educators in political science, community psychology, health, and community experts committed to working towards cultivating our youth's democratic civic virtues to help them become better citizens. Giurcanu's interest in civic engagement stems from first-hand experiences, first with free and fair elections in Romania as a campaign organizer while in college, and later as an election observer during the country's difficult democratization process. Hamilton has decades of experience working in Chicago's West Side neighborhoods as an educator, counselor, chaplain, and Restorative Justice practitioner. This team will work towards implementing a civic engagement model that emphasizes youth capacity, connection to the community, and commitment to social issues. The team serves mostly low-income minority youth and will start with youth workshops at the Peace and Justice Center, BUILD, Inc., while mapping out community-based organizations and youth empowering initiatives across Chicago. They will also conduct a research project to evaluate the impact of the civic engagement model on youth's commitment to civic engagement. To amplify the voice of their community partner, BUILD, Inc., the PIs will disseminate their insights through podcast episodes, an online bibliography of youth-based organizations in Chicago, and a workshop with the community and political leaders.

TITLE: "MappCivics. Youth Empowering in Chicago"

AMOUNT: \$10,000

PROPOSED TIMELINE: June 2023—May 2024

PROJECT LEADS: Dr. Magda Giurcanu, National Louis University & Edwina Hamilton, BUILD, Inc.



GROWING DEMOCRACY GRANT

In the APSA Growing Democracy grant-funded project "Learning by Watching: Courtwatch programs in New Orleans' political science education" Grace Reinke leads a team of academic and community partners to expand the use of court watch programs, which provide citizen oversight of the criminal legal system in Orleans Parish by training local volunteers to observe and record court proceedings and increase judicial accountability. In partnership with CourtWatch NOLA, the project brings more undergraduate volunteers into the pool of court watchers in Orleans parish, and solidifies a relationship between the University of New Orleans and the broader criminal legal reform movement in South Louisiana. She also researches the role this program and others like it can play in expanding collective understandings of democratic participation in the multiethnic and working class communities that are the most impacted by criminal legal systems in the parish. Reinke is an assistant professor of political science and the pre-law advisor at University of New Orleans, and teaches courses on the US judicial system, civil liberties, and constitutional law. Her broader research agenda considers the political and legal dimensions of contemporary inequality, using the perspectives of feminist and Marxist political theory.

TITLE: "Learning by Watching: Courtwatch Programs in New Orleans' Political Science Education"

AMOUNT: \$8,928

PROPOSED TIMELINE: May 2023—April 2024

PROJECT LEADS: Dr. Grace Reinke, University of New Orleans & Jesse Manley, CourtWatch New Orleans



RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS ON CRITICAL ISSUES

"Cultural Pluralism, Community Federalism, and the Form of the State in Cameroon," will study the prospects of "community federalism" in Cameroon. Brewing tensions culminating in the outburst of violence in the two Anglophone regions of Cameroon, namely the North-West and the South-West, (with 6 000 deaths and more than 1 million displaced since 2016) have rekindled an old debate on the form of the State. This crisis has, by and large, particularly revived the issue of managing cultural diversity in a Cameroonian society that is deeply multi-cultural, or at the very least, multiethnic. Several trends have so far emerged from this issue. While some advocate for a return to a federal form comprised of two States (Anglophone and Francophone), others favor the implementation of a broader federalism making each of the ten regions of Cameroon a federal State. A number of actors have sought ways to reinforce the powers of the central government and reject federalism as a fit-all solution to issues plaguing the Cameroonian Postcolonial State. Another category of actors, strongly opposed to any type of federal government and to a more centralized State, seeks to rest the construction of the State of Cameroon on the multiple ethnic communities that currently constitute the country by proposing the implementation of what they term community federalism, transforming each community into a federal State. The present project, informed by these approaches and particularly by the latter, purports to explore this link between cultural pluralism and the form of the state in postcolonial Cameroon in relation to the issue of community federalism. It intends to answer the question of whether the sociological complexity of Cameroon, infused with a great deal of ethnotribal and ethno-linguistic diversity, can actually allow for the implementation of federalism shaped by communitarianism and what would be its challenges with regard to the culture of peace, understood as a positive, dynamic and participative process fostering dialogue among communities. By giving a "voice" to the actors,

the aim will be to understand the "social processes" based on the experiences of these actors. The project is led by Edmond VII Mballa Elanga, an Associate Professor at the University of Douala, who is joined by a team of seven other academics and civil society leaders in Cameroon.

TITLE: "Cultural Pluralism, Community Federalism, and the Form of the State in Cameroon"

AMOUNT: \$18,488

PROPOSED TIMELINE: February 2023—December 2023

TEAM MEMBERS: Dr. Edmond VII Mballa Elanga, University of Douala; Dr. Eric Mathias Owona Nguini, University of Yaounde; Dr. Joseph Marie Zambo Belinga, University of Douala; Dr. Armand Leka Essomba, University of Yaounde; Dr. Benjamin Epho-Epho, University of Maroua-Cameroon; Solange Tiessi (NDHC), NGO for the Defense and Promotion of Human Rights; Aristide Bitouga, Leader of Cameroon Party for national Reconciliation (PCRN); Celestin Djamen, Advocate and Author



PEER-TO-PEER PEDAGOGICAL PARTNERSHIPS

How do we teach immigration topics in the college classroom? In today's political atmosphere, public debates around immigration are divisive and often result in damaging stalemates. With over 20 million students in US schools, instructors must be better prepared to lead meaningful classroom discussions and ethical student learning related to teaching immigration related issues. Yet, few student-centered immigration teaching tools, training seminars, and resources currently exist to support instructors. Grantees Jennifer Martinez-Medina, Lizbeth De La Cruz Santana, and Dr. Randy Villegas will address these challenges through a new initiative entitled "Teaching Immigration Through Digital Storytelling." This project aims to prepare professors at any stage of their careers for teaching contemporary immigration and criminal law-related topics through digital storytelling. The project leaders set to accomplish this by offering a *Teaching Immigration Through Digital Storytelling* guide and a two-day workshop based on the [Leave No One Behind Mural Project \(LNOBMP\)](#). The LNOBMP is a digital storytelling project that illustrates and digitally makes available through thematic murals the myriad experiences of migrant communities directly impacted by US immigration and criminal law. The PIs believe this workshop would be valuable to post-secondary educators seeking to humanize their curriculum through real-life storytelling needed to engage in contemporary immigration debates responsibly. ■

TITLE: "Teaching Immigration Through Digital Storytelling"

AMOUNT: \$25,000

PROPOSED TIMELINE: Fall 2023 – Fall 2025

PROJECT LEADS: Jennifer Martinez-Medina, Portland State University; Lizbeth De La Cruz Santana, University of California, Davis; Dr. Randy Villegas, College of the Sequoias

