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### Aryans, Gender, and American Politics

Robert Tsai

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# SEXUALITY & POLITICS

ORGANIZED SECTION, AMERICAN POLITICAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION

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## Newsletter Editor's Remarks

By Julie Novkov

President Paisley Currah has kindly ceded the section president's corner to me for my final issue as newsletter editor to reflect briefly on the work I've done and hopefully to intrigue or infuriate someone out there enough to follow me in this role.

When I stepped into the position of newsletter editor in 2009, the section was still a very new enterprise, and we did not have either a regularized newsletter or a formally institutionalized position as editor. While the position was not magnificently remunerated (yes, the editor is a volunteer) and brought me little honor and glory at home (and no merit pay), it was and is an unusual opportunity to get to know intimately – and possibly to shape – a dynamic, vigorous movement in political science.

If the newsletter has been a success during my tenure as editor, it's because of the generosity of the many people, both members and non-members of the Sexuality and Politics section, who have volunteered to

## In this Issue

By Julie Novkov

This edition of the Sexuality and Politics Newsletter features four essays that explore the concept of masculinity through lenses of popular culture, history, race, and legal theory. While all incorporate significant theorizing about masculinity, they work out their ideas in different empirical contexts. Taken together, they show the usefulness of the concept of masculinity as an analytical tool for developing better understandings of the relationship among sexuality, politics, and power.

*Susan Burgess* traces the evolution of James Bond films to show precisely how shifts in conceptions of masculine power and authority have paved the way for the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell. Despite the shifts in the character over time, Bond is always consciously defined as an

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write for the newsletter. In an academic world that increasingly values only published, peer-reviewed research, these scholars willingly contributed their time and energy to build our community of ideas. The articles in the newsletters have addressed specific research questions and political interests in the field, but they've also contributed toward developing my sense of what the study of sexuality and politics is, and what it may be in the future.

In my years as a member of APSA, I've maintained

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archetype of masculinity who, in earlier years, required an aggressive centering of (hetero)sexuality but now relies more upon violence as the ultimate act of masculine power. Sexuality itself, and Bond's in particular, remain central disruptive features requiring discipline to preserve the national security state. Even the recent emergence of a more homoerotic Bond retains a commitment to the conception of sexuality as a threat.

*John Grider*, in contrast, shows how masculinity functioned as both an aspiration and a compensatory factor for an increasingly multicultural seafaring labor force in the late nineteenth century. Cut off from the conventional property- and family-based trappings of

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masculinity, the men who went to sea developed their own hypermasculine self image. This image of manliness, however, faced increasing challenges as the shipping industry became more centered in the Pacific, with technological improvements diminishing the sense of manly mastery of early sailors, and wider racial diversity proving difficult to assimilate to a single conception of masculinity.

*Niambi Carter* also addresses race, but does so in the context of lynching. She understands it as a sexualized practice with implications for both black and white masculinity. The practice of lynching simultaneously protected the boundary between white and black and reinforced white masculinity as a form of superiority.

Finally, *Robert Tsai* explores the shadowy world of extreme right-wing constitution-building. The visionary

states of hate groups are obviously racialized, but include well defined constructions of masculinity as well. Tsai shows how the imagined white state rests upon a foundation of masculine and patriarchal power as well as a complementary conception of feminine submission and maternity.

Taken together, these articles trace out new critical directions for research. Masculinity has clear theoretical and political import as a structuring device, an institution, an aspiration, and a foundation, but like sexuality itself, is always a work in progress. I encourage everyone to watch for the longer versions of all of these projects in the future!

*Note: all the papers were presented at the Race, Gender, and Sexuality in Law Workshop in May. Thanks to Ohio University and the National Science Foundation for their sponsorship, and to Kathleen Sullivan and Priscilla Yamin for organizing the workshop.*

## Gays in the Military and Masculinity in the James Bond Film Series: Pop Culture and LGBT Politics

By Susan Burgess

An historic policy shift occurred at the end of 2010 when Congress voted to lift the longstanding ban on gays and lesbians serving openly in the military. How did gays go from being characterized as dangerous perverts threatening to the state, to victims being persecuted by the state, to heroes fighting on behalf of the state? These shifts over time in the framing of gays and lesbians can be seen in *New York Times* coverage of the issue of gays in the military (Burgess 2011). Scholars typically point to standard political and legal explanations such as stakeholder theory (Mucciaroni 2008), historical resistance (Johnson 2004) queer theory (Halley 1999), and identity politics (Lehring 2003) to explain the persistence of earlier resistance to full inclusion of gays and lesbians in public and military service.

Now that the ban has been lifted, the time is ripe to consider what changes in public understanding needed to develop in order for this historical policy shift to occur. Public opinion as measured by standard polling data does not fully account for this change, for if it did the ban would have been lifted long ago when a majority of the American public came to favor allowing gays to

serve openly (Mucciaroni 2008). It seems likely that public support for lifting the ban is linked to other, broader-based shifts in public understanding of a variety of complex factors that are not simply related to gay and lesbian issues such as masculinity, privacy, the state, war and other issues. Using the James Bond film series, I begin to explore this proposition by using popular culture as a gauge of shifting public understanding of masculinity, as expressed in the relationship between heroism, sexuality and violence.

While space limitations preclude a detailed discussion of all 22 films in the James Bond series here, I do provide a brief sketch of several key films to explore the shifts in the public understanding of masculinity that contributed to the eventual lifting of the ban. However, rather than imagining that this policy shift will eventuate in a happy ending or an unambiguous victory for the gay rights movement, I argue that the narrative arc of the Bond movies suggests that the unruliness of all sexuality, hetero or homo, makes it a perpetual threat to the national security state, and thus ripe for perpetual disciplining.

## Aryans, Gender, and American Politics

By Robert L. Tsai

The religious right in America is often discussed as a monolithic movement, but in fact it defies easy categorization. Take the contemporary Aryan community, whose belief system blends several threads within the political tradition. Many, though not all, Aryan Americans are adherents of Christian Identity, a fundamentalist religion spread by Californians Wesley Swift, William Potter Gale, and Richard Butler. Butler later achieved notoriety by establishing an Aryan Nations compound in Hayden Lake, Idaho. A racialized version of British Israelism, Christian Identity joins ideas of white peoplehood and divine destiny with an abiding belief that racism is justified because non-whites descend from damned stock. Aryans—who believe they are Israel’s remnant—trace their Anglo-Saxon history through Western Europe, all the way back to Jacob. But it is a civilization that has steadily been corrupted by the threats of pluralism, feminism, and individualism. To the extent that the state has, over time, taken on these values as political and legal commitments, it has warred against the original understandings of America’s founding as a white, Christian nation. Aryans’ anti-government orientation, colored by a conviction that a Jewish conspiracy controls the government and media, makes them cross-over figures in the so-called Patriot movement.

Although racism and religiosity dominate how Aryans understand themselves, gender plays a crucial role in the formation and maintenance of their imagined community. Beliefs about gender—conceptions of masculinity, expectations of proper male–female relationships, and the place of women in society—are all mobilized for political ends. Attitudes about sex roles help to cement together an eclectic set of political and religious views of “a dying race.” The Aryan is a “racially conscious” white person, who has awoken to the grand history of his race and bravely commits to saving it from extinction. More often than not, the ideal citizen is imagined as an Aryan Warrior.

Chivalry, a military ethos associated with knighthood,

moral purity, and the defense of women, is a favored tool to mobilize racially conscious whites toward revolutionary violence. Legends of courageous males in triumphant warfare ennoble today’s freedom fighter to his task of building a more perfect society by whatever means necessary. Recruits are expected to separate resolutely from family members and friends who persist in their destructive practices.

Adopting a code of ethics not only overlays radical views with a veneer of principle, it also represents a way of drawing a historical link to the American confederacy, another honor-bound legal order. That civilization is remembered as a noble but failed effort at building a white nation-state. Just as Southerners rose to the defense of their women and children against Northern abolitionists, so too modern Aryans urge violence against non-whites and defenders of the liberal order as an imperative to rescue family and home from a fate worse than death. Then, Confederate soldiers had looked to God as their Champion (*Deo Vindice*, the Confederate Seal proclaimed) as they defended “wives and daughters [from] pollution and violation” by slaves and their advocates. Similarly, in laboring manfully for the “fatherland,” today’s Aryans are honoring their ancestors and a shared past. Patriarchal vernacular invokes both the people’s covenant with their Divine Father but also European Nazism.

David Lane, a founder of the violent separatist group *The Order*, coined “The Fourteen Words,” which has become something of a creed among white nationalists. Lane popularized two such slogans issuing a chivalric call to arms: “We must secure the existence of our people and a future for White children” and “Because the beauty of the White Aryan women must not perish from the earth.” In *The Death of the White Race*, a recruiting pamphlet, Lane admonished his white kin:

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“Whiteman, look at the beautiful woman you love. Whitewoman, think about the future of your children. . . . Your children will be outnumbered fifty to one by colored people, who have been inflamed to hatred of our people by the JEWSMEDIA” (Lane 1981).

Gender roles help dictate the terms of political membership. Aryans’ emphasis on a militarized form of masculinity leads them to oppose homosexuality as “absolutely unacceptable in any civilized society.” Anyone who engages in homosexuality or condones it is not welcome. In the words of Aryan novelist Harold Covington, participation in the eradication of homosexuality “is something that decent men simply do” (Covington 2006). Feminism, with its corrupting agenda, is likewise “a moral perversion” in that it “teaches the false idea that men and women are somehow competitors and enemies, and that the bearing and rearing of white children is somehow shameful.” Accordingly, Aryans urge a return to the nuclear family with a traditional married couple—husband and wife—as the basic building block of white society. Rescuing white children is further accomplished by overturning *Roe v. Wade* and *Loving v. Virginia* because abortion and miscegenation disrupt the community’s concept of white motherhood and put an endangered community further at risk.

Early on, the Aryan movement focused on creating (or recovering) a dissident culture. Religious fundamentalism and honor fostered communal bonds and provided a means of disciplining followers. As the community grew, differences emerged over political means and ends. When Richard Butler was alive, he envisioned a “racial nation” governed by divinely-inspired common law. Butler’s *Aryan Warrior* explained the role of the Aryan woman as “dominated by the desire to enter family life” (Butler 1980). Her orientation is not guided by private interests, but rather “the national interest” in ensuring the survival of the white race and “higher culture.” Moving the battlefield into the home, Butler admonishes, “Every child that an Aryan mother brings into the world is a battle waged for the existence of her people.” She “guards the purity of her blood,” and therefore a way of life, by pursuing the ideal of “contented womanhood” in having a “happy, well run home to refresh and inspire her man.” In turn, she can expect to be treated “with chivalry and

respect by Aryan man.” In a well-ordered polity, “it is a duty of the Aryan State to safeguard the mother and child” (Butler 1980).

In recent years, others have begun to imagine what a large-scale Aryan republic might look like. In 2006, Covington, Lane, and several Aryan fighters in federal prison drafted a constitution for the proposed Northwest American Republic. The constitution would govern an Aryan republic carved out of the existing states of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, and perhaps Alaska.

*“Unlike the American system, the President of the Aryan Republic must exemplify the highest standards of manliness.”*

Gender remains key to constitutional order, even as Aryans have become more sophisticated about outreach and political science. Unlike the U.S. Constitution, which is textually silent as to ideal family structure, the NAR Constitution affirms that “the basis of all human civilization has been, and shall remain, the traditional nuclear family based on the institution of marriage, with the wife and mother as the heart and the gainfully employed father as the head” (Constitution of the Northwest American Republic 2006: § 1, art. IX). This family model serves as “supporting pillar of the Republic, its laws and institutions.”

Unlike the American system, the President of the Aryan Republic must exemplify the highest standards of manliness. The draft constitution made it the president’s duty to “instill and maintain the highest standards of personal courtesy, deliberation, maturity, integrity and courage in the manhood of the republic” (Constitution of the Northwest American Republic 2006: § 2, art. VII). Only a “first-class citizen” who is a military veteran is eligible to run for president (drafters did not believe in political equality, but created a three-tier system of citizenship to incentivize civic virtue and create a “racial elite”).

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To usher in a new age of chivalry, the constitution created a National Honor Court to be supervised by the president. The Honor Court would create regulations and protocols for the resolution of “personal differences between male residents and citizens” (Constitution of the Northwest American Republic 2006: § 3, art. IX). It would bring back “private combat by mutual consent” as a dispute resolution technique. In an Aryan American republic, lawyers would lose their monopoly over the law and influence on family matters. Instead, citizens would have a chance to resolve disputes “in accordance with the ancient and historic traditions and practices of the European family of nations.”

A Bill of Rights recognizes “the right to life of unborn children.” Citizens are expected to refrain from homosexual conduct and interracial sex on pain of revocation of citizenship and banishment. And the constitution makes service in the armed forces a requirement for all “able-bodied male residents and citizens” (Constitution of the Northwest American Republic 2006: § 5, art. I). During the period of revolutionary struggle, the chivalric code is pliable enough to permit women to fight on behalf of the nation. Women are allowed on the front lines not because of a

commitment to gender equality, but out of absolute necessity. With major ambitions and unpopular views, Aryans need all hands on deck in their struggle. But if political separation from the United States is ever accomplished and the revolution consolidated, women can return to their traditional role of birthing and nurturing a nation.

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*Robert Tsai is Professor of Law, American University, Washington College of Law. His article is drawn from a chapter of the forthcoming book, Defiant Designs: America's Forgotten Constitutions (Harvard University Press, 2012).*

## SHOUT OUT! Members' Milestones

**Scott Barclay** has taken up a new position as a Professor at Drexel University and will be the Chair of History and Politics.

**Michael Bosia** has been promoted to Associate Professor (with tenure). He will be the Director of Gender Studies for the 2011–12 academic year.

**Julie Novkov** is now the chair of the University at Albany, SUNY's Department of Political Science

**Sarah Pemberton's** paper, "Enforcing Gender: the Construction of Masculinity and Femininity in Prison Regimes" won the 2011 Western Political Science Association Betty Nesvold Women and Politics Award. She will also be a Visiting Assistant Professor in Political Science at Ohio University for 2011/12.

**Jason Pierceson** has received a Fulbright Award and will serve as the Fulbright Visiting Research Chair in U.S. Policy Studies at the University of Alberta

**Carisa Showden** has been promoted to Associate Professor (with tenure).

**Steve Sanders** has been appointed visiting assistant professor at the University of Michigan Law School. Steve recently taught as a lecturer at Michigan while practicing law in the Supreme Court and appellate litigation group of Mayer Brown LLP in Chicago. He was also recently appointed to the AAUP's litigation committee.

**Georgia Warnke** has joined the Department of Political Science at the University of California, Riverside as Distinguished Professor. She joins Farah Godrej, Bronwyn Leebaw, John Medearis, John Christian Laursen in the department's political theory section.

**Meredith Weiss** has been promoted to Associate Professor (with tenure).