2013 Ethics Section Business Meeting – April 5, 2013, San Francisco, CA

Section Chair Antonio Franceschiet called the meeting to order at 6:15.

Brent Steele (Vice-Chair) from University of Kansas and Amy Eckert of Metropolitan State College of Denver were introduced.

1. Approval of Minutes

The first order of business was to approve the minutes from last year’s business meeting. These were unanimously approved.

2. Governing Council Report

Antonio reported key developments from the Governing Council meeting. ISA has been experiencing a remarkable period of growth and membership has increased by 98% over the past ten years. As a result of this growth, finances are extremely healthy, and $10,000 has been set aside for intellectual and cultural extracurricular events at the 2013 ISA meeting in Toronto.

The 2013 ISA in San Francisco is the largest to date. The Junior Scholar symposium has proven particularly popular. More than 1000 abstracts were submitted for this program, of which only 64 were selected. Those abstracts not selected for the Junior Scholar Symposium were sent to sections for consideration for the regular program.

The allocation of panels was another topic discussed at the Governing Council meeting. 80% of panels are allocated to ISA sections, with the remaining 20% allocated to the conference theme. The chair of the Theory section requested some transparency in the division of panel slots among sections, and a Professional Rights and Responsibilities committee is charged with the development of a distribution mechanism. Antonio noted the pressure created by the growing number of ISA sections. The number of ISA sections is now up to 29, with the three new sections (Religion, Global Health, and History) created this year.

The Governing Council selected a new editorial team for International Studies Quarterly. The Publications Committee was unable to reach a decision between the two top proposals, and the Executive Committee was also unable to reach a decision. Antonio voted for the Georgetown proposal by Dan Nexon and his team, on the basis that this team seemed more epistemologically open, which benefits the members of the Ethics Section. The other bid was an Iowa/Tennessee team led by Sara Mitchell.

Richard Beardsworth asked whether the practice of six person panels would continue. Antonio said he sensed that most representatives at the Governing Council meeting believed the six person panels were a bad idea, but added that it would be the decision of future program chairs. A follow up inquired about the possibility of eliminating the discussant position from some panels, and proceeding directly from paper presentations to questions and comments from the floor. Brent Steele noted that he had attended a six person panel in which the panel moved along and there was adequate time for
discussion. If the six person panels do continue, he emphasized the importance of selecting panel chairs who can keep everyone on task well. Jamie Gaskarth suggested the possibility of having the same person act as chair and discussant to determine whether a discussant would be necessary, which Antonio suggested could be a possibility. Michael Struett noted that he had served as a chair and discussant on a panel of six, but that one person had dropped out. Harry Gould cautioned against the elimination of the discussant role, as this feedback is particularly important to junior scholars and grad students.

3. Section Report

In terms of the Ethics section, the Ethics section has shrunk slightly from 255 members in 2012 to 237 members in 2013. He speculated that some of the loss could be attributable to the creation of the new Theory section. Harry Gould inquired about how many of the lost members were people who had left ISA. Antonio replied that ISA is not giving us that data. A follow up question asked how many members are grad students, and Antonio responded that he will try to get that information from ISA. Brent had asked people to spread the word about the Ethics section and business meeting at Ethics panels. Ilan Baron speculated that Ethics could be a good catch-all for those doing theoretical work that did not fit neatly into another section, and that these people may have now joined the Theory section instead. Antonio noted some benefits to the Ethics section of the formation of the Theory section, including their co-sponsorship of panels and of the reception, along with their help in securing Cambridge University Press as a sponsor for our reception with Theory.

In terms of finances, Ethics has a balance of about $2000. Aside from the cost of the reception, the section’s only other standing expense is the book prize and awards plaque.

In terms of communications, Ethics maintains two channels. The section has an ISA web page, which is maintained by ISA. In addition, there is a Facebook page, to which members can post items after they “like” the page on Facebook.

Antonio acknowledged Brent for his help in assembling the 2013 program. Ethics was allotted 21 panels, but with co-sponsorships we were able to increase that number to 34. Ethics also co-sponsored roundtables honoring Nick Onuf, Richard Falk, and the 2012 award-winning book by Bronwyn Leebaw.

4. 2013 Book Award

The 2013 Book Award committee, consisting of Chair Neta Crawford, Eric Heinze, and Jim Bohman, selected two books for the 2013 book award. The winner was Alex Bellamy’s *Massacres and Morality: Mass Atrocities in an Age of Civilian Immunity*. Selected for notable mention was Daniel Levine’s *Recovering International Relations*. Heinze announced the award winners and outlined the committee’s praise for each work:
Bellamy’s book argues that despite the existence of international norms and rules that prohibit the deliberate killing of civilians, the persistence of massacres of civilians can be understood through a complex combination of normative commitments, calculations of self-interest, and the unique political dynamics of specific cases. Bellamy thus offers a very rich, deep analysis of these processes that illustrate the “mechanics” (not his word) of how the norm of civilian immunity rose, was and continues to be challenged, and how states and other actors regard it today. The book is extremely well-executed, tightly-argued, and leverages a breadth of empirical evidence in tracing the evolution of the norm against mass atrocities. This is, to my knowledge, the first treatment of the norm prohibiting civilian massacre using (what I would consider) an ‘English School’ approach (i.e. historical, legal, and normative analysis).

Levine’s book is a sophisticated, original and path-breaking study of IR theory. His knowledge and analysis of an impressive breadth of political, social, and IR theory is truly astounding, as he seeks to reveal the problematic normative commitments that underlay IR theory as well as the dangers of reification in social and political theory/research. He proposes a more reflexive approach, via ‘sustainable critique,’ wherein even alleged value-free empirical research must confront and make explicit these normative commitments, and be overall more aware of the dangers of the uncritical perpetuation of normative values and commitments. The book stands to truly advance the field of IR theory and is a much-needed epistemological analysis, or meta-critique, of the theoretical commitments of the field of IR.

5. 2014 Book Award Committee

A new committee consisting of chair Kimberly Hutchings, to serve for two years, and members Harry Gould and Lou Cabrera was elected unanimously. Antonio encouraged members to submit their books for consideration.

6. 2015 ISA Meeting

2014 ISA will be held March 26-29 in Toronto. The 2014 theme is Spaces and Places. Antonio encouraged submissions and invited people to suggest proposals for workshops through the Ethics section as well.

7. ISA-West

Ethics will co-sponsor the 2013 ISA-West meeting, which will be held September 29-30 in Pasadena, CA. Amy encouraged submissions, particularly around the theme, Disruptions in World Politics: Policy Problems, Normative Reponses, to be submitted through the new ISA mechanism, once it comes online.
8. Other business/adjournment

Antonio inquired whether there was other business. No one raised any, and the meeting adjourned at 7:05.