Annual Report – 2011

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning and Allies Caucus (LGBTQA) for International Studies Association (ISA) had a very productive and successful year as we began 2011 (our first full operational year as a caucus). The year began with a very promising show of support from the general membership at the annual conference in Montreal and with a focus on its core mission including: promoting the fair and equal treatment of members of the LGBTQ community in the ISA and in the profession of international studies, in areas including but not limited to graduate school admission, financial assistance in schools, employment, tenure, and promotion; combating discrimination against and provide support for LGBTQ faculty, student, and professional members of the ISA; to encourage the application of the skills of scholars and students of international studies to combat discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation; and to promote the recruitment of new members to the Caucus specifically and ISA generally.

We are thrilled to have a space in the ISA to advance these goals and we are grateful for the support of the Governing Council in these efforts. We would like to ask members of the Governing Council to encourage their colleagues and graduate students - men, women, those who identify as members of the LGBTQ community and their “Allies” - to join our Caucus.

Membership and Budget

We are pleased to report that our membership numbers over the course of the last few years have increased substantially, growing from just 3 members in 2009 to a current membership of 63. An extremely important aspect of the organization’s thinking about membership in a caucus such as ours is the hesitancy that some members have expressed to join. Members have articulated a concern that their colleges and universities may not support membership in a “queer caucus” and international colleagues have expressed about their professional (and sometimes personal) safety should their membership in the caucus become known to their coworkers. While our original conceptualization of the caucus intended to accommodate these concerns by creating a support category for “Allies” of LGBTQ members, we continue to work through ways in which members of the ISA can support the caucus and benefit from its mission while respecting these limitations.

Closely associated to membership numbers is of course the size of our caucus budget balance. Year to date the LGBTQA Caucus balance is $784.00. Two general forms of fundraising attribute to this balance including personal donations from our board and membership dues. While innovative and institutional forms of financial support for the caucus are a focus of the Board in the coming year, we are hopeful that with increased support from the membership will further improve our operational budget.
Developing a presence – ISA Montreal 2011

We are pleased to report that the “Queer Theory in International Relations Teaching and Research: Making Connections and Challenging Boundaries” panel was incredibly well attended with 62 members in attendance. As the first panel for the new caucus we were very encouraged with this attendance. Members voiced a real interest in the ways in which the interdisciplinary panel defined, explored, and problematized the varied ways in which queer and, more recently trans-theory, practice and activism are understood. Our roundtable, “Marginalization and Repression: Professional Governance and Advocacy in Response to Contexts of Political Hostility and Transition” was also well attended with 15 members in attendance. The roundtable addressed the effect of marriage bans on professional associations and scholarship and the impact of site conference site selection for LGBTQ scholars. Notably, graduate student attendance at this roundtable was particularly high.

In addition to our panel and roundtable, the Caucus also held its annual open business meeting on Wednesday afternoon with 12 members in attendance.

Officers for 2011-12
Chair → Sandra McEvoy
Vice-Chair → Cai Wilkinson
Secretary/Treasurer → Catia Confortini
Members at Large → Mike Bosia, Jennifer Heeg, Patricia Campbell

The 2012 LGBTQA “Courage Award”
2012 marks the first year that the LGBTQA Caucus will offer an award of any type. The Board unanimously agreed that given our current budgetary limitations that we would proceed conservatively and not attach any type of monetary value to the award. Two “Courage Awards” will be given this year, each in memoriam. The first will recognize the work and advocacy of Paula Ettelbrick of the United States. Ettelbrick held leadership positions in some of the most influential rights groups of the past 25 years including the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. While much of her career was devoted to advancing legal and human rights of the LGBTQ community in the United States, especially in the area of marriage equality, Ettelbrick was a staunch critic of US foreign policy that restricted funding to countries most adversely impacted by HIV/AIDS. Not only for her courage, but for her brave and devoted work to the international LGBTQ community we honor Paula this year. We are pleased to report that Paula’s sister Linda Murphy will be traveling from Arizona to accept the award on her family’s behalf.
The second LGBTQA Caucus Courage Award will be awarded to David Kato of Uganda. Kato was considered the “founding father” of Uganda’s LGBTQ rights movement and was a staunch and outspoken opponent of his home country’s “Anti-Homosexuality Bill” which proposed death for H.I.V.-positive gay men and prison for anyone who failed to turn in a known homosexual to authorities. He co-founded the group advocacy group “Sexual Minorities Uganda” to campaign against the anti-homosexuality bill and served as the group’s litigation officer. In January 2011, Kato was beaten to death in Uganda by government supporters. For his courage and advocacy on behalf of the human rights of LGBTQ people across Africa, we honor David for this year. David’s colleague, Val Kalende will accept the award on his behalf but unfortunately will not be able to attend the reception in San Diego. Sandy McEvoy, Chair of the LGBTQA Caucus will meet with Val in Boston following the convention to deliver the award.

ISA 2012
The LGBTQA Caucus will again have one panel and one roundtable presentation again in 2012. Each panel strives to grapple with some of the most pressing and largely under-researched issues confronting LGBTQ scholars and scholars of LGBTQ issues in the disciplines of International Relations and Political Science. The first panel, “Researching Sexuality in Difficult Contexts: Theoretical and Practical Implications” focuses on how direct and reflexive consideration of the research context itself offers additional ways to interrogate dynamics of power and privilege, generate critical insights into the normative assumptions that underpin disciplinary theories and methodologies. Panel members will draw their experiences of researching sexuality in a variety of rich and sometimes contentious environments, panelists will reflect on what factors make a context ‘difficult’ and for whom. The second LGBTQA caucus conference allocation is devoted to a roundtable on LGBTQI scholarship in the International Relations and Political Science classroom. The panel will explore a range of approaches to teaching and learning that interrogate the most basic assumptions about gender and power in the IR classroom and panelists will discuss the challenge of helping students think about experiences of gender and sexuality in non-essentialized ways.

Capping off the convention in San Diego, we look forward to holding our open business meeting on Wednesday afternoon and a co-sponsored reception with FTGS and the Women’s Caucus on Tuesday evening. We are grateful for the generous support of both FTGS and the Women’s Caucus.