

Join us at the 2008 Annual Meeting Categories and the Politics of Global Inequalities

Statement from the 2008 Program Chairs Jane Junn (Rutgers) and Ed Keller (UCLA)

Categorization and differentiation of ideas, people, institutions, and nations has continued unabated as an intellectual force in political science throughout its 100-year history as a professional discipline. Important changes in the political economy and social organization of the world including globalization, democratization, and international migration, highlight the dynamic character of the distinctions manifest in categories, and suggest a close examination of the construction, interpretation, and maintenance of categorical boundaries. The theme of the annual meeting of the 2008 American Political Science Association, "Categories and the Politics of Global Inequalities," challenges scholars to carefully reconsider the evolving relationship between categories and global inequalities.

From New Orleans to Bamako, from Rio to Jakarta, inequalities closely track distinctions in social status, class, race, and gender, mirroring marginalization based in categorical imperatives. Hierarchies constructed from these categorical distinctions create and re-inscribe structural inequalities in institutions, culture, and the practice of politics, and result in unjust outcomes. Justified by the categories themselves, global inequalities have become both persistent and pernicious. What are the political roots, processes, and consequences of differentiation, stratification, and marginalization based on status and identity? How do systems or patterns of inequality operate in national, transnational, and international political, policy, institutional, and academic frameworks? How do local, national, international, and transnational institutions and social movements address these issues and to what effect? How can those most negatively affected assert their voices and take action to change their circumstances? Is social justice possible? How can new paradigms that address the intersection of categories be utilized to capture the implications of these processes?

These questions challenge political science as a discipline to wrestle with problems of disparity and deprivation based on the categorical distinctions that lead to marginalization and privilege. Modern social science scholarship should consider questions related to the intersecting inequalities present in the world today. We encourage conference participants to engage in conversations beyond the customary disciplinary territory, and welcome panels that include activists, political practitioners, and multi- and inter-disciplinary scholars across allied fields. We also encourage panel organizers to seek the highest expression of diversity in their membership.



2008 Program Chairs
Jane Junn, Rutgers University
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