



# AMERICAN JOURNAL OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

## Editor's Midterm Report to the Executive Council of the Midwest Political Science Association August 20, 2017

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The *AJPS* Editorial Office and operations are supported by the [Michigan State University Department of Political Science](#) (Charles Ostrom, Chair), the [Michigan State University College of Social Science](#) (Rachel T.A. Croson, Dean), and the [Midwest Political Science Association](#) (Will Morgan, Executive Director). The *AJPS* is published by [Wiley](#) (Michael Streeter, Social Science Editor).

This Report from the Editor of the *American Journal of Political Science* to the Executive Council of the Midwest Political Science Association covers operations and editorial activities from January 1, 2017 through August 20, 2017. The Report presents information about the *Journal's* status and influence, manuscript processing statistics, and news from the Editorial Office. Where appropriate and useful, information from previous years will be provided for comparison. Finally, the Report lists the members of the current Editorial Board.

## Impact and Importance

The *AJPS* strives to maintain its position as one of the premier publication outlets, not only within the political science discipline, but also throughout the social sciences generally. To that end, we continue to monitor closely the *Journal's* performance on the various metrics summarizing its presence, visibility, and usage within the research community. The main indicators used for this purpose are the Thomson Reuters Impact Factors and the Google Scholar h5-index score.

I am very pleased to say that the 2016 Two-Year Impact Factor, once again, puts the *AJPS* into first place among political science journals! The impact factor gives the average number of citations in 2016 to articles published in the *AJPS* during the 2014 and 2015. The 2016 Two-Year Impact Factor for the *AJPS* is 5.044. The second- through fourth-ranked political science journals are *World Politics* (2-YR IF - 4.025), the Review of International *Political Economy* (2-Yr IF = 3.452), and *International Organization* (2-Yr IF = 3.406), respectively. *Political Analysis* comes in at the fifth-ranked position (2-Yr IF = 3.361) and the *American Political Science Review* is ranked sixth (2-Yr IF = 3.316). The *Annual Review of Political Science* has typically been among the top five journals; but in 2016, it ranked fourteenth (2-Yr IF = 2.804), in terms of average citations to articles over the preceding two years. This is the second year in a row that the *AJPS* has achieved a higher Impact Factor than the *APSR*. And the gap between the two is increasing. It is also interesting to note that the 2016 Impact Factor for the *AJPS* represents an increase over the 2015 Two-Year Impact Factor (which was 4.515), while those for *Political Analysis*, the *APSR*, and the *Annual Review* went down slightly, compared to their 2015 values.

The 2016 Five-Year Impact Factor gives the average number of citations during 2016 to articles published from 2011 through 2015. The 2016 5-Yr IF for the *AJPS* is 5.436. This is basically identical to the 2015 figure of 5.424. Just as in 2015, the Five-Year Impact Factor ranks the *Journal* in third place behind the *American Political Science Review* (ranked first, with 5-Yr IF = 6.658) and *Political Analysis* (ranked second, with 5-Yr IF = 6.103), and just ahead of the *Annual Review of Political Science* (ranked fourth, with 5-Yr IF = 4.777).

Additional grounds for optimism about the professional visibility of the *AJPS* are provided by current citation statistics from Google Scholar. The 2017 h5-index for the *AJPS* is 64; this means that 64 articles have been cited at least 64 times during the five-year period from June 2012 through June 2017. This h5-index value is identical to the *AJPS's* 2016 h5-index; it places the *AJPS* eighth among [all social science journals](#) and at first place within [political science](#). The *American Political Science Review* again follows the *AJPS*, with an h5-index value of 57. This ranks the *APSR* second within political science and twelfth among all social science journals. It also represents a decline from the corresponding 2016 h5-index value of 61. The h5-median for the *AJPS* (the median number of citations to the articles used to create the h5-index value) is 104, a substantial increase over the 2016 h5-median of 85. The h5 results show that many *AJPS* articles are cited and that the number of citations per article also is increasing over time. All of these figures confirm that the *American Journal of Political Science* is maintaining— and perhaps even enhancing— its stature as one of the premier outlets for high-quality research in the social sciences.

### Submissions and Turnaround Times

Table 1 provides the total number of manuscript submissions and the mean number of days from submission until the editorial decision for the past sixteen years, as well as for January 11 through July 16, 2016. Stated simply, the number of submissions remains at the high level to which it jumped in 2014. During the first six and one-half months of 2016, 524 manuscripts were submitted to the *AJPS*, generating a submission rate of 2.79 manuscripts per day! This represents a slight decrease compared to the figure from 2015: 549 submissions from January 11 through the start of the summer hiatus on July 16, 2016, or a rate of 2.94 submissions per day. But, in absolute terms, the submission rate remains very high.

**Table 1:** Yearly submissions and mean turnaround times.

Year	Number of submissions	Mean turnaround time (days)
2000	530	46
2001	586	39
2002	657	51
2003	803	36
2004	783	36
2005	691	41
2006	694	67
2007	583	130
2008	531	118
2009	479	113
2010	760	101
2011	665	91
2012	750	107
2013	696	93
2014	874	73
2015	876	45
2016	928	54
2017 (Jan. 9 until July 15)	524	61

As the figures in Table 1 show, the *AJPS* Editorial Staff and I have been fairly successful at maintaining relatively short turnaround times for processing manuscripts. But, the average time from submission to editorial decision has been increasing. So far in 2017, the mean turnaround time is 61 days— one week longer than the mean turnaround in 2016. But, this figure is a bit misleading, in several ways. For one thing, it contains manuscripts that are not sent out to external referees for review. These “desk rejects” are processed very quickly, with a mean turnaround of one day. After the desk-rejected papers are removed from the calculation, the mean turnaround time increases to 78 days. But, the distribution of turnaround times has a very long upper tail, with several high-end outliers (e.g., three manuscripts that were under review for more than 250 days). Therefore, the median is actually the more appropriate measure of central tendency. The median turnaround time for all manuscripts (including desk-rejects) is 54 days. Among externally-reviewed manuscripts, the median turnaround is 62 days.

The source of the asymmetry in the distribution of turnaround times is delinquent reviewers (i.e., those who never provided a review or never responded to my invitation to review). A sizable number

of papers languish for a long period of time while waiting for one, and occasionally two, very late reviews. In most such cases, I eventually make an editorial decision based upon the available information rather than trying to solicit another referee. So, when the editorial decision was based on two or one reviews, the mean turnaround time is quite long, at 148 days (with a median of 140 days). For manuscripts that received a full set of three reviews, the mean turnaround time is only 57 days, with a median of 55. Note that these latter figures are based only on externally-reviewed manuscripts.

### Submission Rates by Subfield

Table 2 reports submission rates by subfield for the first seven months in each year from 2012 until 2017. There are some comparability issues that should be noted. First, previous *AJPS* Editor Rick Wilson used a different system for calculating the percentages in 2012 and 2013. If an author classified a manuscript into several different categories, he used a weighting system to “distribute” that paper’s contribution across the subfield categories. Currently, the subfields are based only upon the first category listed by each author. Second, the reporting periods differ slightly, depending upon the start of the *AJPS* summer hiatus. The 2012 and 2013 figures cover January 1 through August 15. The 2014 figures only cover January 1 through July 31. The 2015 figures cover January 1 through August 23. The 2016 figures cover January 1 through July 16. And the 2017 figures cover January 1 through July 15.

**Table 2:** Submissions by subfield, January 1 through July 15 for 2017, January 1 through July 16 for 2016, January 1 through August 23 for 2015, January 1 through July 31 for 2014, and January 1 through August 15 for 2012 and 2013.

Subfield	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
American Behavior	29.5%	28.3%	24.9%	23.2%	23.4%	28.3%
American Institutions	20.8%	20.1%	15.8%	15.0%	15.0%	16.6%
Comparative Politics	22.0%	21.5%	32.2%	35.9%	27.1%	22.5%
International Relations	14.0%	11.7%	16.4%	14.8%	21%	17.6%
Methodology, Formal Theory	9.8%	13.2%	7.6%	7.5%	7.7%	9.5%
Normative Theory	3.2%	4.5%	3.2%	3.5%	5.8%	5.5%

The distribution of submissions across subfields during the first six and one-half months of 2017 shows some changes relative to previous years. Submissions in American political behavior have increased by almost five points to slightly more than 28%. In three subfields, American political institutions, Methodology and formal theory, and Normative theory, there are only very minor changes from the 2016 figures (i.e., less than two percentage points in either direction). But

submissions in comparative politics continue a two-year decline down to 22.5% of the total. And, after a surge in 2016, international relations submissions receded a bit, down to almost 18% of all submissions.

It is difficult to assess the significance of the apparent downward trend in comparative politics submissions. For one thing, the decrease only occurs in 2016 and 2017. And, it follows a sharp upward spike in comparative submissions back in 2014 and 2015. In any case, the Editorial Staff and I plan to monitor submissions across subfields carefully, to discern any patterns that may exist therein.

### Editorial Decisions

From January 1 through August 20, 2017, I made decisions on 561 manuscripts. This number is quite a bit larger than the comparable figure from 2016, when I made 479 decisions from January 1 through July 31. Of the decisions so far in 2017, 515, or about 92%, were made on initial submissions, 40 (or seven percent) were made on first revisions, and 6 (or one percent) were made on second revisions. The decision outcomes for initial submissions, first revisions, and second revisions during the first seven and one-half months of 2017 are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Editorial decisions, January 1 through August 20, 2017.

Decision	Initial Submission ( <i>n</i> = 515)	First Revision ( <i>n</i> = 40)	Second Revision ( <i>n</i> = 6)
Desk Reject	24.3%	—	—
Reject	67.0%	15.0%	16.7%
Revise and Resubmit	8.7%	22.5%	—
Accept	—	62.5%	83.3%

If desk-rejected manuscripts are eliminated from consideration, then 88.5% of submissions were rejected after the initial review while 11.5% were issued a “revise and resubmit” decision. These percentages are almost identical to the comparable figures from 2016. Looking across all decisions so far in 2017, the total acceptance rate for manuscripts submitted to the *AJPS* is 5.3%. This is one percentage point lower than the comparable figure from 2016.

### Reviews and Referees

From January 1 through August 1, 2017, the *AJPS* Editorial Office received 1,158 referee reports. The mean number of days from the invitation to review until receipt of the review is 34.6 (or 32.4 days from the day the referee accepts the invitation). The average turnaround time for reviews is about the same as during the similar period in 2016. The distribution of recommendations from the reviews we received is given in Table 4.

**Table 4:** Reviewer recommendations, January 1 through August 1, 2017.

Recommendation	Percentage ( <i>n</i> = 1, 158)
Reject	55.8%
Revise and Resubmit	32.5%
Publish with Minor Revisions	7.9%
Publish as Is	3.9%

The distribution of recommendations is very stable over time. There are one percent more “Reject” recommendations, and about one percent fewer “Revise and Resubmit” recommendations compared to 2016. And, combined “Publish” recommendations remain almost exactly at last years’ level with just under 12% total.

Of course, we only receive reviews from a subset of the individuals who are invited to serve as referees. During the first seven months of 2017, I invited 1,539 individuals to review manuscripts for the *AJPS*. The distribution of responses (and non-responses) to the invitation is shown in Table 5.

**Table 5:** Responses to Editor’s invitation to review a manuscript for the *AJPS*, January 9 through August 1, 2017.

Response	Percentage ( <i>n</i> = 1, 539)	Subtotal
Completed review	66.3%	
Review in progress	12.2%	78.5%
Declined invitation	15.6%	
Never responded	5.9%	
		21.5%

When compared to the first seven months of 2016, the 2017 distribution of responses to review invitations has remained very stable. One encouraging (albeit rather small) change is that the percentage of completed reviews increased by almost five percentage points (from 61.8% in 2016 to 66.3% this year). And the percentage of declined invitations decreased by about one percent, from 16.8% in 2016 to 15.6% in 2017. On the other hand, the proportion of non-responses more than doubled from 2.5% in 2016 to 5.9% this year. Of course, the latter figures are fairly small in

absolute numbers. But, it still is troubling that more than one-fifth of the people invited to review for the *Journal* fail to do so. Turning to the other side, the Editorial Staff and I certainly are grateful to the four-fifths of the invitees who do provide reviews. Hopefully, we can maintain this fairly high level of completion and we will continue our efforts to reduce the number of declined invitations and totally non-responsive invitees.

### **News from the Editorial Office**

There have been some major changes in staffing within the *AJPS* Editorial Office. As I first explained in the Annual Report last spring, former Managing Editor Robert Lupton received a tenure-track faculty appointment at the University of Connecticut, while former Editorial Interns Miles Armaly and Adam Enders took tenure-track positions at the University of Mississippi and the University of Louisville, respectively. I certainly wish them all the best of luck in their new positions, and they will be missed greatly in the Editorial Office. The *AJPS* could not have achieved the success that it has over the past three and a half years without their hard work and vital contributions.

While it will be impossible to “replace” Bob, Adam, and Miles, I am very fortunate to have recruited three excellent and highly qualified individuals to fill the positions. Marty Jordan is the new Managing Editor. Marty is an advanced Ph.D. student at Michigan State, specializing in American public policy and state politics. The new Editorial Interns are Jessica Schoenherr and Nate Smith. Jessica and Nate also are Ph.D. students at Michigan State, specializing in American politics and international relations, respectively.

Marty, Jessica, and Nate started their new positions as the *AJPS* came off its summer hiatus in mid-August. They all definitely hit the ground running! The transition has been virtually seamless, and manuscript processing operations continue to run very smoothly. I believe that we are fulfilling our commitment to submitting authors by providing them with informative and timely critiques from referees. The feedback we have received from various participants in this process—including a sizable number of authors who received negative editorial decisions—continues to be overwhelmingly positive.

The *AJPS* is recognized throughout the broad scientific community for our innovations and leadership in the area of data access and research transparency. For example, our guidelines for preparing replication files have been adopted by other journal editors. And, both the [Center for Open Science](#) and the [Harvard Dataverse](#) have used the *AJPS* repeatedly as an example of “best practices” for procedures in research transparency.

The *AJPS* [Replication and Verification Policy](#) is particularly rigorous in that authors are given specific instructions about what information must be provided, and all replication materials are verified to make sure that they do, in fact, reproduce the results reported in the corresponding *AJPS* article. Verification is carried out by a third party: [The Odum Institute for Research in Social Science](#) at the University of North Carolina for articles with quantitative analyses, and the [Qualitative Data Repository](#) at Syracuse University for articles with qualitative analyses.

The *AJPS* Replication and Verification Policy was first implemented in March 2015. So far, all analyses in accepted articles have been quantitative in nature. As of August 1, 2017, the Odum Institute has worked with 124 manuscripts. Of these, the verification has been completed on 107 manuscripts. Materials from six manuscripts currently are being processed by the Odum Institute staff, and 11 others are awaiting resubmission from the author. While the verifications generally

have been carried out very smoothly, we are still pursuing steps to integrate these activities more fully into the workflow of manuscript processing.

Earlier this year, I engaged in several “outreach” activities. With two colleagues from the Odum Institute, I wrote an article titled “[Should Journals be Responsible for Reproducibility](#)” for the online journal, *Inside Higher Ed*. This article is part of a series, titled “[Rethinking Research](#)” and there also is a [podcast](#) discussing the series and the issues covered in the various articles. And, as part of the 2017 [Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research \(ICPSR\) Summer Program in Quantitative Methods of Social Research](#), I participated along with Professor Arthur S. Lupia (University of Michigan) in a session titled “[The Importance of Transparency and Reproducibility in the Social Sciences](#).” I believe that these kinds of activities are important for publicizing our Replication and Verification Policy, explaining how it works, and clarifying its importance for the scientific research community.

The *AJPS* is participating in the [Election Research Preacceptance Competition \(ERPC\)](#), organized by Arthur Lupia and Brendan Nyhan, and Funded by the Laura and John Arnold Foundation. Competing scholars were required to design papers with analyses using items from the 2016 American National Election Study (ANES) interview schedule, and pre-register their designs prior to the public release of the data. The *AJPS*, along with eight other journals, agreed to review the pre-registered designs and make editorial decisions based on the quality of the design (i.e., prior to any data analysis). There were only two submissions to the *AJPS* for the competition, and both received negative recommendations from the manuscript referees; therefore, they were rejected. Consistent with the competition rules, the reviews for one of these rejected manuscripts were forwarded to another participating journal for further consideration. The ERPC continues on until the end of 2017. However, I believe it is unlikely that we will receive any further submissions for it since authors were required to register their designs prior to the release of the 2016 ANES data (which occurred on March 31, 2017).

During the coming months, I plan to initiate two new policies for the *Journal*. First, I will require authors to provide citations to the data sources used in their articles. Data citation is increasingly being recognized as an important component of research transparency. This practice not only makes it easier for readers to understand what is being done in an analysis. It also provides formal credit to the scholars and institutions that create the data. Hopefully, *AJPS* authors and readers will see these advantages and adopt data citation as a regular component of scholarly writing and manuscript preparation.

Second, the *AJPS* will partner with [Publons](#) in order to provide manuscript referees with an opportunity to create a formal record of their reviewing activity. Essentially, Publons creates an online record for an individual that records the number of times the person completes a review for the *AJPS* (or for other journals). Establishing such a record with Publons is completely optional and up to the individual referees; the system does not compromise the double-blind nature of the review process in any way. It does give referees an official record of their service to the discipline.

### **Editorial Board (August 2017)**

James Adams, *University of California, Davis*  
Claire Adida, *University of California, San Diego*  
E. Scott Adler, *University of Colorado*  
David Armstrong, *University of Western Ontario*  
Ryan Bakker, *University of Georgia*

Jason Barabas, *Stony Brook University*  
William Bianco, *Indiana University*  
Cristina Bodea, *Michigan State University*  
Cheryl Boudreau, *University of California, Davis*  
Ethan Bueno de Mesquita, *University of Chicago*  
Gregory Caldeira, *Ohio State University*  
David Campbell, *University of Notre Dame*  
Eric Chang, *Michigan State University*  
Kevin Clarke, *University of Rochester*  
Darren Davis, *University of Notre Dame*  
Michelle Dion, *McMaster University*  
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Guy Grossman, *University of Pennsylvania*  
Zoltan Hajnal, *University of California, San Diego*  
Christopher Hare, *University of California, Davis*  
Peter Hatemi, *Pennsylvania State University*  
Jude Hays, *University of Pittsburgh*  
Kim Hill, *Texas A&M University*  
Patricia Hurley, *Texas A&M University*  
Kosuke Imai, *Princeton University*  
Zaryab Iqbal, *Pennsylvania State University*  
Nathan Jensen, *George Washington University*  
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James Johnson, *University of Rochester*  
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Kerem Ozan Kalkan, *Eastern Kentucky University*  
Nathan Kelly, *University of Tennessee*  
Kenneth Kollman, *University of Michigan*  
George Krause, *University of Pittsburgh*  
Dimitri Landa, *New York University*  
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Michael Lewis-Beck, *University of Iowa*  
Quan Li, *Texas A&M University*  
Staffan Lindberg, *University of Gothenburg*  
Xiaobo Lü, *University of Texas*  
Noam Lupu, *University of Wisconsin, Madison*  
Neil Malhotra, *Stanford University*  
Gwyneth McClendon, *Harvard University*  
Scott McClurg, *Southern Illinois University*  
Bonnie Meguid, *University of Rochester*  
Sara Mitchell, *University of Iowa*  
Jana Morgan, *University of Tennessee*  
Bumba Mukherjee, *Pennsylvania State University*  
Megan Mullin, *Duke University*  
Irfan Nooruddin, *Georgetown University*  
Susan Orr, *State University of New York, Brockport*  
Costas Panagopoulos, *Fordham University*  
John Patty, *University of Chicago*

Elizabeth Maggie Penn, *University of Chicago*  
Mark Pickup, *Simon Fraser University*  
Kristopher Ramsay, *Princeton University*  
Dan Reiter, *Emory University*  
Meredith Rolfe, *University of Massachusetts*  
Saundra Schneider, *Michigan State University*  
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Yael Shomer, *Tel Aviv University*  
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Jeffrey Staton, *Emory University*  
Cameron Thies, *Arizona State University*  
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