THROUGH THE LOOKING-GLASS

GLOBALIZATION AND LIFE OUTSIDE OF WASHINGTON

Professor Wade Jacoby, Mary Lou Fulton Professor of Political Science, came to BYU after working as a Legislative Assistant in Congress, earning his PhD in political science from MIT and then teaching for 5 years at Grinnell College, Iowa. Since coming to BYU, he has been published in several journals and publishers, including Cambridge University Press.

Why did you decide to become a professor at BYU?
I was teaching somewhere else for several years and I got regular invitations to apply for BYU. I guess I was curious to see how the department was; I had two friends that worked here and they were very positive about BYU, so I came out and gave a talk and had a great impression of the department. I met the faculty at a research seminar – which continues to be a good research seminar – and decided to apply for a job here.

What got you into teaching?
I was writing a dissertation, thinking I was going to go into policy work in Washington (which is where I had been before graduate school) and my dissertation advisor asked ‘what sort of place do you want to teach at?’ so I replied ‘I haven’t really thought it through; I thought I’d go back to Washington.’ He said ‘well, you’ve written a good dissertation, you could get published, you could get a teaching job: you should consider it.’ So I thought, ‘you can teach first then go to Washington later, but you can’t go to Washington first and teach later,’ so I tried teaching and I really liked it and stuck with it.

Do you think you’ll go back to Washington eventually?
I do go to Washington fairly regularly, and I do a little bit of policy work, but obviously I took a different path. I do academic work and not policy work, so the policy stuff is really a very minor part of my portfolio.

To that extent, what skill set has helped you reach your current career goals?
I was at MIT; I think the first thing was that they were very, very good at thinking through different approaches to an analytical topic – not saying there’s one objective truth out there and you have to find it. There certainly is truth out there, but that truth appears differently through different perspectives – so that was very important to me. The second thing I would say is writing; I was already a good writer when I got there but I became a much better writer when I was there (and I spent a lot of time worrying and thinking about that and trying to teach that to undergraduates). Finally, I would say oral communication skills; being able to stand in front
of people and being able to gauge where they are and their understanding and read their body language and so on.

“you can’t go to Washington first and teach later”

What is your research interest, and what research have you been working on recently?
There’s a new book which I’ve written – The Politics of Representation in the Global Age. One of the central preoccupations of the political scientist is interest representation; how do people know what their interests are, and how do they pursue them. We have a big literature on that – but then globalization comes along and it has an effect on all of that. So we have a story [in the book] on political parties, we have a story on trade unions, employer organizations – these are all ways of getting your interest represented. What has globalization done to all of those? The answer is in the book. Broadly, the argument is that we often don’t know what our interests are; we have to identify them. That’s stage one of three. That identification process has important things that are indeterminate – we can’t quite figure them out just by looking at people.

[directed towards me] Where are you from? Me: ‘England.’ WJ: Where at? Me: ‘Tunbridge Wells, in Kent.’ WJ: Ok so, Kent. Your political interests may come from that your parents have a certain occupation, or you seek out a certain occupation, or your location in the home counties. You may be English, you may be British, and it may be hard for me to figure out whether you think of yourself as English or British or none of the above. You may think of your interests as most represented by Mormon organizations. You can’t just look at someone and know what their interests are; they have to be identified. Then we say they have to be globalized – so you can’t just have a preference for something, you have to go after it, otherwise in democratic politics no one’s really going to listen to you. If you’re not saying anything, there’s nothing to listen to – so you have to mobilize. Then finally, given that you can identify as English or someone who’s a part of the business community or someone who’s LDS, you have to have organizations that can adjudicate between those competing interests and help crystallize them around one thing.

“we often don’t know what our interests are; we have to identify them”

So we talk about how globalization has changed all three of those processes.

The next area of interest is the political economy of Central and Eastern Europe; these countries, twenty-five years after communism: where are they, how are they doing? A second thing is the Euro crisis – I’ve been doing a lot of work on the Euro crisis and particularly the German and central European angle. So those are both obviously political economy angles. I’m doing a talk at Brown University in the Fall for the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall – they want to have an American talk of what it’s been for Germany and a German talk about what it’s been for America! That will be at the Watson Institute at Brown University.

I also just got back from a trip to Finland, Norway, Sweden, and Estonia with 30 other teachers, and will do some testimony for the Utah Education Policy Coalition – they are going to have us come in and testify in a few weeks before the state legislature and talk on what we found on our tour of education.
RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE: GETTING YOUR VOICE HEARD IN THE GLOBAL ERA

In an age where globalization – that is, as Hall, Jacoby, Levy and Meunier put it, ‘the increases in the flows of people, goods and capital across national borders... neoliberal ideas... and the growth of transnational communication’ – we are witnessing a huge change in the logistics of both national and international politics. How is interest representation affected by all of this? In this new publication, BYU faculty member Wade Jacoby with colleagues Peter Hall, Jonah Levy and Sophie Meunier discusses the impact of globalization on the representation of interests, with a specific focus on political economy.

The publication is a collection of essays, edited by Jacoby, Hall, Levy and Meunier, that each discuss a different aspect of the main thesis: that there are three symbiotic steps to representing interest – identifying the interest (identification), acting upon that interest (mobilization), and resolving conflicting interests (adjudication). A consistent theme is the notion that our world is moving away from the neo-corporatist systems of politics that have dominated past ages, and that we are moving towards a more neoliberal system where businesses and polities jointly identify interests, and form new coalitions of interest based on a reinvention of their interests through a greater understanding of the political issues at hand.

In essence, the book challenges the current prevailing views on what influences an actor’s interests – arguing that current views are far too mechanistic – and that there is a much more creative, political process that is present from the genesis of an interest. The editors then take this idea and apply it to a globalized world – one where such mechanistic views might seem apparent – and posit that this creative, political process has not vanished, but merely adapted to the new global era.