**Interpretive Methods and Methodologies Conference Group @ APSA**

**2013 Charles Taylor Book Award Citation**

The Interpretive Methods and Methodologies Conference Group of the American Political Science Association presents an annual award for the best book in political science that employs or develops interpretive methodologies and methods. This award is named in recognition of the contributions of Charles Taylor to the advancement of interpretive thinking in the political and social sciences. In his 1971 essay “Interpretation and the Sciences of Man,” Taylor powerfully critiqued the aspiration to model the study of politics on the natural sciences, and he cogently explained how “interpretation is essential to explanation” in the human sciences. This essay, along with Taylor’s *Philosophical Papers* and many other articles, book chapters, and volumes, have long been a source of inspiration for scholars seeking to develop and apply an interpretive approach to the study of politics.

The award is given to a single- or multi-authored book or an edited volume exploring any aspect of political life that either engages interpretive methodological issues or that reports the results of empirical research conducted using interpretive research methods. The book can engage these ideas philosophically, in keeping with much of Professor Taylor’s work and the sense of ‘methodology’ as an expression and/or application of philosophical concerns, such as with ontological and epistemological issues. The book can also present empirical research, as long as it explicitly considers the methodological issues and concerns that arose in the conduct of the research.

The 2013 Charles Taylor Book Award was presented to Sharon Sliwinski for her book *Human Rights in Camera*, published by the University of Chicago (2011).

*Human Rights in Camera* does that critical theoretical work Sheldon Wolin referred to as “making the familiar unfamiliar.” Sliwinski shows us that human rights are not revealed by reason alone, but through an experience of seeing, “imagined and idealized on the wings of aesthetic experience.” The spaces of human rights become difficult to map. Are they the spaces of violence and violation or are they the distant sites where the visual artifacts of those violations are circulated? Sliwinski reminds us that the language of “crimes against humanity” emerges out of the heart of darkness, from an African-American denouncing the horrors of the Belgian Congo. The time of human rights is no longer limited to the twentieth century. The history of trauma and the visual is enriched by her recollection of the effects of the Lisbon earthquake on Kant, Goethe and the Enlightenment. We are all familiar with Lee Miller’s photographs of Dachau. These have become iconic and in that transformation have been made easy to recognize, easy to read. Sliwinski unsettles those readings. She teaches us to look again, to recognize the photograph taken not only of but in the boxcar loaded with corpses, by a photographer who has placed herself among the dead.

Throughout the work, Sliwinski draws on the literature of trauma; on aesthetic theory, on the politics of sensation, and on political economy. We are asked to remember the development of photographic technology, the imbrication of photographic technologies and the mass media, and that Miller’s iconic photographs of the Holocaust were published in Vogue.

Sliwinski does not turn away from the difficult ethical issues presented by photography and spectatorship. She has shown us that bearing witness is not without its dark pleasures and moral dangers.  
 We congratulate Professor Sliwinski on her admirable book. She has brought newness into the world. We look forward to seeing how her work changes the terrain of inquiry in the social sciences and the humanities.

Anne Norton, University of Pennsylvania (Chair)

Raymond Duvall, University of Minnesota

Victoria Hattam, New School for Social Research

Presented by Anne Norton, for the committee, at the Interpretive Methodologies & Methods business meeting, American Political Science Association conference, Chicago (August 30, 2013)