

**Interpretative Methodologies and Methods Group @ APSA
2021 Grain of Sand Award for Lifetime Contributions to Interpretive
Thought and Methods**

Winner

Mary Fainsod Katzenstein, Stephen and Evalyn Milman Professor of American Studies (emerita). Cornell University

About the award: The Grain of Sand Award honors a political scientist whose contributions to interpretive studies of the political, and, indeed, to the discipline itself, its ideas, and its persons, have been longstanding and merit special recognition.

Drawing combined inspiration from the opening lines of William Blake's "Auguries of Innocence" and Wislawa Szymborska's "View with a Grain of Sand," the Grain of Sand Award honors a scholar whose contributions demonstrate creative and sustained engagement with questions of enduring political importance from an interpretive perspective. Echoing Szymborska's "We call it a grain of sand," the award underscores the centrality of meaning making in both the constitution and study of the political; drawing on Blake's "To see a world in a grain of sand," the award honors the capacity of interpretive scholarship to embody and inspire imaginative theorizing, the intentional cultivation of new lines of sight through an expansion of literary and experiential resources, and the nourishing of a playfulness of mind so necessary to the vitality of social science.

To: Mary Fainsod Katzenstein, Stephen and Evalyn Milman Professor of American Studies (emerita). Cornell University

Through her extensive research, mentorship, and teaching, Dr. Mary Fainsod Katzenstein has intentionally and imaginatively explored issues including (but not limited to) ethnic politics, social movements, feminism, and mass incarceration. By epitomizing how political scientists may elucidate and critically challenge enduring political questions and concepts for and with many communities, Mary's work is exemplary within the interpretivist community.

Spanning seven books, dozens of articles and book chapters, and numerous op-eds, Mary's scholarship embodies and inspires imaginative theorizing. To name just one early example, her first book, *Ethnicity & Equality: The Shiv Sena Party and Preferential Policies in Bombay* (1979) studied the Hindu nationalist Shiv Sena Party in India to understand how and under what conditions nativist ideas may be organized into coherent political movements. Combining materials from interviews with constitutional and philosophical analysis, a review in *The Journal of Asian Studies* stated that *Ethnicity & Equality* offers "[a]n excellent guide to the dynamics of such nativist movements" that carefully analyzes the political determinants and consequences of population shifts.¹ In this book, Mary challenged the notion that demographic conditions alone

¹ Andersen, Walter K. 1982. "Ethnicity and Equality: The Shiv Sena Party and Preferential Policies in Bombay. By Mary Fainsod Katzenstein. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979. 237

trigger ethnic politics. Instead, she argues, nativist sentiment is aroused when “outside” groups are interpreted as blocking access to essential goods such as housing, jobs, land, and education. In response, the local (“native”) political population will use political power to achieve cultural and economic objectives.

Further demonstrating her capacity to unearth and interpret surprising political outcomes, question assumptions, and see political phenomena in new ways, Mary’s *Faithful and Fearless: Moving Feminist Protest inside the Church and the Military* (1998) drew on interviews with over one hundred women in these institutions. Her findings pushed scholars and activists to re-think the assumption that a social movement’s efficacy depends on its visibility and capacity for disruption. *Faithful and Fearless* reveals that even as the military and the church are hierarchal, isolating, and often demeaning to them, women *inside* these institutions have “proved fearless in their attempts to reshape them.” A ground-breaking work that called attention to “protest within institutions as a new stage in the history both of feminism and of social movements in America,” *Faithful and Fearless* won the APSA’s 1999 Victoria Schuck Award, which honors the best book published on the topic of women and politics each year.

Mary’s creative and sustained engagement with questions of enduring political importance extends to her more recent work on mass incarceration in the United States. As a 2001-02 Russell Sage Foundation grant recipient, Mary examined how US government policies ranging from mandatory minimum sentence laws, to Pell Grants, to the levying of fines and fees, have impacted the growth of prisons and the lives and political capacities of those under their supervision. Here, again, Mary’s research questions and re-interprets political assumptions and assessments, and her article "Felony Disenfranchisement and the Dark Side of American Liberalism" (with Leila Mohsen Ibrahim and Katharine D. Rubin) offers but one example. In this piece, which appeared in *Perspectives on Politics* (2010) and won APSA’s 2011 Heinz I. Eulau Award, Mary and her co-authors considered what the disenfranchisement of people convicted of felonies reveals about American liberalism’s two familiar narratives: a story of a triumphal and inclusionary liberalism, and the "multiple traditions" account. According to Mary and her co-authors, felony disenfranchisement reveals a third, dark face of American liberal democracy: a hyphenated American liberalism in which an exclusionary politics is deeply embedded.

Mary’s research has cultivated new lines of sight, and through her mentorship and teaching she has guided her colleagues and students do the same. As an advisor and mentor to many graduate students, Mary always supported and encouraged interpretive research about a wide range of topics, many of which other advisors may have dismissed as too “small n” or “weird” for political science. With seemingly endless patience, Mary helped her graduate students unearth and untangle puzzles, tensions, and surprising questions through their research. And by always asking, “what is this a case of?” she helped them situate their (at times weird, small n) research within broader disciplinary literatures and challenge conventional wisdom.

Pp. Appendixes, Index. \$15.” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 41 (2). Cambridge University Press: 385–87. doi:10.2307/2054995.

Through her teaching, Mary always pushed her students to question political phenomena *and* their assumptions about who counts and merits education in the polity. If ratemyprofessor.com is to be believed, Mary's courses at Cornell "changed people's lives." Yet Mary did not limit her transformative teaching to the ivory tower. She also led Cornell's Prison Education Program (CPEP), which was "established to provide college courses to inmates at a maximum and medium security prison in upstate New York, and to engage Cornell faculty and students with the vital issue of the country's burgeoning incarceration population."² Mary not only secured funding and support to expand CPEP, she was also instrumental to her students' learning and success. One of the men who studied with CPEP while in prison recalled "the sight of this tiny woman crossing an exercise yard full of prisoners and braving the risk to teach us and bring us hope. I wish to thank Professor K on behalf of all those men you believed in and for possessing the courage to act upon those beliefs."³

Altogether, Mary is a model of a scholar and a human being: a rare individual who researches widely, thinks deeply, challenges common assumptions, and always supports and encourages her students and colleagues to do the same. Her longstanding contributions to political science have enriched and advanced interpretivism, and in recognition of this, we are honored to present her with the 2021 Grain of Sand Award.

² See <https://cpep.cornell.edu/about-us/our-mission/>

³ See <https://news.cornell.edu/stories/2015/04/mary-katzenstein-honored-prison-education-program>