

Critical *Review*

Alumni Association Newsletter

2002

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Letter from the Chair

Dear Critical Review Seminar alumnus/alumna,

It is my great pleasure to introduce the Critical Review Alumni Association, an organization started by a group of students who wanted to stay connected with the people and ideas that they became acquainted with during the Critical Review Seminars. The idea for the group was first articulated by Shannon Mayer '98, and thanks to your enthusiasm, we have begun a series of exciting initiatives that will allow us to keep in touch with our fellow seminar alumni, get to know attendees from other years who share our career or academic interests, and stay connected with *Critical Review* and the provocative ideas found within its pages.

The first of these initiatives is this inaugural newsletter. I hope it will be the first of many that will keep you abreast of the activities and interests of other alumni.

In this issue, the *CRAA Newsletter* focuses on the impact that the seminars have had on many aspiring academics and journalists. Inside you'll find assessments of how the seminar has influenced alumni, a catalogue of alumni articles that have appeared in *Critical Review*, and a list of academic papers inspired by seminar topics. Julian Sanchez writes about a journalistic project inspired by the seminar he attended last summer, and Katherine Mangu-Ward explains her initiative to bring *Critical Review* into cyberspace. Samuel DeCanio gives us a sneak-peak at the new issue of *Critical Review*, and finally Prof. Jeffrey Friedman offers some research agendas that might be of interest to alumni as they search for potential thesis and dissertation topics.

The CRAA is also launching a website, which will have a variety of career and academic resources, as well as message boards and articles about ideas related to the seminar. I hope that this online home will enable alumni who share similar interests to easily connect with each other.

A final project is an alumni reunion this summer in New York City, to coincide with this year's seminars.

If you have additional ideas about how the CRAA can best serve the alumni community, or if you want to help plan one of the initiatives I mentioned above, please contact me with your suggestions. Also, please keep in touch by letting me know where you are and what you are doing.

Sincerely,

Mike Murakami '01



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Critical Impact: What Alumni are Saying About the Seminars

Earlier this year, we asked Critical Review Seminar alumni what effects the seminars have had on their ideas and careers. The response was overwhelming and unanimously positive. The seminars have had a profound impact on many of the attendees' academic and professional choices. Since the seminar was first offered in 1995, many alumni have since become rising stars in their respective fields, spreading the concerns raised at the seminars into academia, journalism, and public policy.

'The Critical Review Foundation seminar was, without question, the defining moment in my intellectual development. It undermined just about all of my long-held assumptions and prejudices. Just as importantly, it left me with a renewed commitment to learning as much as I possibly could about both the real world and the world of ideas.'

—Reihan Salam '99, Harvard University '01
Currently a researcher-reporter at *The New Republic*.

'I entered the seminar with overwhelmingly leftist political opinions, primarily due to their intuitive appeal and the political orientation of my family and friends, but I came away with a much more open mind and radically revised opinions. By exposing me to public ignorance literature and free-market economic theories, the seminar challenged me to think critically about my uninformed opinions for the first time in an intellectually engaging environment.'

The seminar opened my eyes to a clearer, more thoughtful and accurate way to approach contemporary issues.

Since this was such a rewarding and stimulating experience, when I needed to formulate an honors thesis topic last summer, I decided to attend the seminar again, at my own expense, because I thought that it would help me generate interesting and worthwhile ideas. I was right: the seminar inspired me to consider the implications that the overwhelming public ignorance findings have for contemporary democratic theory. In my thesis, I critique Jürgen Habermas's model of deliberative democracy with

"The Seminar left me with a renewed commitment to learning as much as I possibly could about both the real world and the world of ideas."

much of the same literature that the seminar introduced me to. Throughout this demanding and challenging process, Prof. Friedman's guidance and advice have been invaluable to me. He has devoted endless amounts of time to discussing even the minutest details of my arguments and answering every one of my questions.

Beyond my thesis, the seminar has also significantly influenced my career plans. Before the seminar, I had planned to attend medical school and never considered attending graduate school in political science or becoming a journalist. Now, because of my seminar experiences, these new career options have become likely candidates. The seminar helped me realize that I have an interest in political theory and political writing that I hope to pursue.'

—Matt Weinshall '00, Harvard University '02

My participation in the Critical Review Seminar ended up being a turning point in my academic career. In fact, my participation in the seminar continues to influence my thinking to this day. Some of the readings from that week started me down an intellectual path that led to three academic publications.'

—Tom Hoffman '95

Currently a doctoral candidate in Political Science at Indiana University.

'The ideas to which I was exposed at the seminar are absolutely unique and have given me a new hope and new direction.'

—Swagata Banerjee '99

Currently a graduate student in Economics at the University of Georgia.

'The seminar made me curious about the way in which ignorance and confidence are often vested in the same person, so far as political decisions are concerned. The questions I now plan to pursue as a Ph.D. student are questions that first arose at the seminar: for example, do democratic procedures produce better outcomes in some policy areas than in others? Might different institutional designs mitigate (or exacerbate) the most extreme cases of voter ignorance on policy matters?'

In large part, graduate school was an unappealing prospect because I had no vision of a company of scholars. The seminar changed that: never before had I been in the company of students who were at once so thoughtful and so motivated to pursue the study of political problems.'

—John Bullock '99, Yale University '01

Currently a graduate student in Political Science at Stanford University.

'Even compared to the intellectual environment at Harvard University, where I studied at the time, or Yale University, where I had studied before, the CR Seminar was special in its abil-

ity to stimulate and challenge intellectually. All of the necessary steps for creating a successful seminar were taken: the participants were carefully chosen, and the readings selected well. I have never before been in an environment where such high quality intellectual debate took place around the clock, without the slightest sign of weariness among the participants. And our discussions did not cease with the official end of the seminar on a given day; debates were carried over to

dinner and later to the rooms. It must also be noted that the discussion, while tough in content, was always cordial and open-minded. The participants were open to and respectful of each other's opinion, while being critical at the same time.

Most importantly, the seminar con-

vinced me that ideological judgments divorced from empirical analysis lead to flawed conclusions and bad politics. To insist on policies based on ideology regardless of the practical impact is often counterproductive. Put in Weberian

terms, value-rational behavior which ignores potential outcomes is more cynical than instrumentally rational politics that actually alleviates social problems. Most significantly, this insight was the final straw in nudging me towards a career in political science with

“I have attended virtually all of the many pro-market seminars... and none has surpassed the Critical Review Seminar in its impact on my teaching and research plans.”

a focus on empirical analysis as opposed to an ideologically motivated career in journalism and politics. I aspire to produce empirical work that is untainted by my own normative views.

Finally, I think it is important to stress the importance Prof. Friedman's mentoring to my own intellectual de-

Seminar Inspires Media-Bias Magazine

By Julian Sanchez '01

New York University '02, Philosophy

When legislators make noises about “bipartisanship,” it's usually a safe bet that some unsavory expansion of political power is on the horizon. But might the reverse hold as well? Would a truly bipartisan critique of the political scene cut in a libertarian direction, almost by default? In the hope of providing an answer, I'm in the process of creating Sub-text.com, an online magazine inspired by the 2001 Critical Review Seminar and dedicated to examining media bias.

We're all familiar with “media watchdog” groups whose primary function is to peddle the favorite conspiracy theories of the left and right (starring greedy corporate conglomerates, or a journalistic elite, respectively) and the broader media criticism monopolized by barely comprehensible postmodern intellectuals. Each

is hobbled by an obvious bias which saps their credibility to all but the faithful, and neither is willing to focus on the sort of institutional factors (highlighted in the CR seminars) that don't fit cleanly into their ideological packages.

Sub-text will be different: it will blast the shallowness of mainstream political discourse without dogmatic presuppositions. Political junkies of all stripes should hate it, which, I hope, means that everyone else will find it refreshing. If it tends to cultivate a general cynicism about political solutions to social problems, well, call that a happy fringe benefit. But either way, it should provide a sharper perspective on politics and media than can be found elsewhere.

I'll be releasing a more detailed description of Sub-text shortly, so that seminar alumni with journalistic aspirations can be persuaded to write for us and help make this project a success.

Contact me at editor@sub-text.com.

velopment. He never ceased to challenge the seminar participants intellectually, and at the same time he always made himself available to his students, and supported them in all the ways he could. The fascinating paradox was that while I never felt my ideological thinking undermined as fundamentally as during the debates with him, I also never felt taken as seriously as by him.'

—Gabor Gyori '98, Harvard University '99
Currently a graduate student in International Relations at the University of Chicago.

'I have attended virtually all of the many pro-market seminars for students in the United States, and none has surpassed the Critical Review Seminar in its impact on my teaching and research plans. Never dogmatic or ideological, the seminar opens one up to new perspectives and new ways of approaching real problems in the real world.'

—David Fitzsimons '96
Currently a doctoral candidate in History at the University of Michigan.

'The Critical Review Seminar I attended changed the way I think about politics more than any class I've taken in my time at Columbia University. I cannot possibly understate the value of the readings and guided discussions in stimulating my interest in philosophy and journalism. Unlike many other student-related libertarian functions which I have attended, this one goes way beyond the basics and challenges participants to identify exactly why free markets are justified. It is the arduousness of the seminar that provides participants with the necessary groundwork to defend libertarian ideas in a sophisticated and profound way. There probably hasn't been a day since the seminar when I haven't found that rigor, as well as the particular themes of the seminar, to be playing an important role in both my academic work and my journalism.'

—Jaime Sneider '00, Columbia University '02

'Though more and more opportunities exist for interested students to gain ex-

posure to libertarian ideas, much rarer is the opportunity for advanced students to gather and openly challenge libertarian orthodoxies from a starting point of shared sympathy and knowledge. The Critical Review Seminars provide just that opportunity, and Critical Review does the same for discriminating libertarian readers.'

—Abraham Sutherland '99, Harvard University '98
Currently a law student at the University of California, Berkeley.

'The seminar was an exciting reminder that free-market ideas should be part of a productive dialogue with other philosophies, not something relegated to newspaper business sections or pamphlets for true believers. I think it left me more open-minded and better able to engage the political debates of the day.'

—Todd Seavey '01, Brown University '91
Currently a free-lance writer.

'I think of my Critical Review Seminar experience almost daily. In three days, I gained a solid understanding of the

Getting Critical Review Online

By Katherine Mangu-Ward '01
Yale University '02, Political Science

As growing numbers of CR Seminar alumni and others begin to incorporate seminar-inspired concepts and topics into academic work, they will be surprised (as I was) to find that back issues of *Critical Review* are not on line. The reason CR has delayed as long as it has in joining the digital revolution is a worry, shared by many underfunded small journals, that free online access would reduce the incentive of libraries to pay for subscriptions to the print version of the journal.

But the realization that staying offline was defeating the main purpose of *Critical Review*, which is to get its ideas into the hands of the young, has prompted the start of a project to get *Critical Review* accessible online as quickly as possible.

Students and scholars are lazy. They will take the path of least resistance to get the appropriate number of citations at the end of a paper. Virtually everyone now relies on internet searching to discover what else has been written on their topic of interest. Only a very few of the hundreds of people doing regular searches on topics covered by *Critical Review* will pursue a hit that yields only a title and an abstract (the current online status of CR). However, when a single click yields the full text of a relevant article, a larger audience will be captured and overall recognition of *Critical Review* will increase. Moreover, students will be able to read the provocative ideas in CR, not just cite them.

The process of getting *Critical Review* fully online will take some time and may cost significant revenue (each library subscription brings in \$54 per year), but for the ideas in CR to gain wider circulation it is necessary and long overdue.

Research Agendas: Seminar-related 'Topics in Search of Authors'

In their six years of operation, the Critical Review summer seminars (like *Critical Review* itself) have already inspired an outpouring of published articles and unpublished undergraduate and graduate theses (see accounts elsewhere in this newsletter). Here, courtesy of Professor Friedman, are some more "topics in search of authors." In future issues of the *CRAA Newsletter*, we'll be publishing descriptions of the research agendas being pursued by alumni, as well as thesis ideas they've come up with that others may want to look into.

1. The U.S. Constitution as a Revolt against Public Ignorance. The recent scholarship

promise and limitations of the libertarian paradigm. I can honestly say those three days have been as influential on my thinking and career path as any semester of coursework for which I paid thousands of dollars. My effectiveness in my current work — economic development and education policy — is enhanced by the depth of my understanding of such concepts as the secondary and tertiary effects of economic policy and the persistent gap between good intentions and good results. CR arms emerging leaders and scholars with the intellectual and empirical firepower to engage the prevailing wisdom of the day and challenge the system to stand for results.'

—Will Johnson '97,
Washington University '97

'The seminar was one of the most challenging intellectual experiences I have ever had. The caliber of the other attendees was both stimulating and truly humbling. Also, Prof. Friedman is a superb teacher. He led fascinating dis-

ussions on topics ranging from social science methodology to the dynamics of public opinion with expert capability. Not a single participant left the seminar without commenting on the quality of the instruction, and the paradigmatic shift it brought about in their worldviews.

I happen to know why the seminars are never advertised or even mentioned on Critical Review's web site: there is always a waiting list of participants, consisting of hand-picked students Professor Friedman has encountered while teaching at Yale, Dartmouth, Harvard, and (currently) Columbia; and of recommendees of seminar alumni, who are eager to have their brightest friends experience the seminar's wonders. I especially value being one of the alumni who have shared this experience and constitute a community of scholars and journalists pursuing ideas inspired by the seminar.'

—Sam DeCanio '98, UC Santa Cruz '99
Currently a graduate student in Political Science at Ohio State University.

'The Critical Review Foundation seminar was for me an exceedingly rewarding opportunity to actively grapple with important ideas of ideology, politics, and representative democracy, all in a uniquely challenging and encouraging environment. It was as demanding and dynamic as the political and philosophical discussion must have been in the Athenian agora.'

—S. Phineas Upham '99, Harvard University '00
Currently a graduate student in Applied Economics and Management Science at The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania.

How has the Critical Review Seminar affected you? If you have new or additional thoughts you would like to share with the alumni community, please contact the CRAA and we'll be sure to include them in our next newsletter.

on Federalism has inadvertently unearthed abundant evidence that one of the main complaints of the Founders against the Articles of Confederation concerned the alacrity with which state governments violated sound economic principles in order to satisfy popular demands for debt relief, cheap currency, protective tariffs, and the like. But no scholar examining these matters has been economically literate, so the rationale for the Founders' concerns, and the populist nature of the Articles' defects, have gone largely unremarked, and could be the basis for a major reinterpretation of the Founding.

2. Political Parties as Heuristics. One of the Founders' main goals was to avoid partisan "factionalism," yet within a few years a robust party system had emerged and has remained central to the structure of U.S. democracy. Is this because the public in any democracy requires parties to organize the otherwise confusing world of politics into overly simplistic "us vs. them" categories?

3. The Industrial Revolution vs. the Immiseration of the Workers.

Scholars such as Max Hartwell and various Cliometricians have challenged the notion that the Industrial Revolution impoverished British workers. But unexpected—although completely unrecognized—support for this view has come from the dominant, New Left school of labor history launched by E. P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class*. Thompson shows that opposition to industrialization was *not* spearheaded by "immiserated" factory workers, but by artisans whose jobs were threatened by the vastly more efficient factory system—because this system produced cheap clothes for the masses by employing the masses. Nobody has yet used this paradoxical finding of New Left historians as the basis for overturning the Marxist "immiseration thesis."

4. Ignorant Imperialism. Scholars have shown that the late 19th/early 20th century rush of great powers to create empires in the Third World produced an economic drain, not an

economic gain, for them. Yet the myth is now nearly universally accepted that "imperialism" is responsible for Third World poverty because *the imperialists themselves* believed, erroneously, that imperialism would transfer wealth from the Third to the First World. So there is research to be done on the economically illiterate arguments that the proponents of imperialism used, on the public endorsement of these ideas in the era of imperialism, and on how these ideas have come down to us in the present to form the conventional wisdom.

5. The Presidency as a Heuristic Device. In *The Rhetorical Presidency*, Jeffrey Tulis documents the amazing story of the emergence of the presidency from a reticent, passive office in the 19th century to the dominant, programmatic center of our political lives, and the transformation of the president into a celebrity whose every utterance and habit is scrutinized. In the early 19th century, a president who dared to propose and campaign

for a legislative agenda would have been impeached (as Andrew Johnson was); by the mid 20th century, a president who failed to do so (for example, by refusing to deliver the State of the Union message in person, or by failing to propose a budget), would have been impeached. What Tulis does not explain is why this momentous change occurred. Is it possible that by the early 20th century the scope of federal policy had become so vast that the (politically ignorant) public needed a president, or some such human embodiment of the State, to help make politics understandable by personalizing it?

An alternative hypothesis: it's not the incomprehensible scope of modern states' power, but the legitimization of that power through nationalism, that requires the "personalization" of the state—so it can be thought to "embody" the united will of the "nation." Could this be why even parliamentary governments have symbolic "heads of state" (presidents, monarchs) who stand apart from party politics that divide "the people," and why in presidential governments, the president is most respected when he rises above partisanship?

6. The Rise of the "Objective" Media. In the 19th century, the press was unabashedly partisan. In the 20th century, it vehemently denies its partisanship. Why? Did the growth of state power bring with it such a proliferation of partisan arguments for and against myriad government policies that the public gravitated toward news media that purported to sort out the various claims through impartial reporting? Perhaps a case study of the rise of the *New York Times*—the first great "nonpartisan" newspaper—with this hypothesis in mind could make such a dissertation more tractable.

7. Why the Great Depression? Austrians and monetarists have offered conflicting accounts of the causes of the Great Depression, but no Austrians have inferred from recent "free banking" theory a comprehensive rethinking of Murray Rothbard's account, which in any case ends before the onset of the Depression and so fails to explain why it lasted so long.

8. Urban Policy and State Autonomy. In *The Contested City*, John Mollenkopf offers the rudiments of an account of how Demo-

cratic urban policy (starting with the Kennedy administration) and Republican suburban policy (e.g., the Interstate highway system) used public-spirited rationales to mobilize political support for programs that actually were designed to create permanent constituencies for the two parties—even while wreaking havoc on the quality of life in both cities and suburbs. Mollenkopf's account, however, is undermined by his essentially Marxist political economy. A particularly elegant way of revising the history of U.S. urban/suburban policy (especially for a Yale student) might be to revisit Robert Dahl's classic *Who Governs*, a study of New Haven's urban renewal program that celebrates Mayor Richard Lee's success in demolishing much of his own city—with the support of business elites who erroneously thought this would revitalize New Haven—even though Dahl never troubles to examine the actual effects of urban renewal, which was to transform New Haven into one of the most economically devastated, hopeless, ugly cities in America.

9. The Myth of Electoral Mandates. Because public ignorance of politics is not widely recognized, the media and academics alike routinely overinterpret elections as reflecting deep philosophical "mandates" for changes in policy direction. A nice way of exploding this myth would be to examine the electorate's failure to understand, let alone endorse, Ronald Reagan's views in 1980 or the Contract with America in 1994.

10. Name Identification in Politics. Political scientists, and politicians, are aware that voters are so disconnected from politics that just getting them to recognize a politician's name is half the battle. But perhaps it's virtually all of the battle? For example, the current president was nominated by his party only because early polls gave him a huge lead over potential opponents—largely (one might demonstrate) because the public confused him with his father, the former president. And his opponent was nominated only because, as the vice president, he had nearly universal name recognition. The examples could be multiplied almost endlessly, especially regarding offices that command less public attention than the presidency. (State representatives tend to win races for state senate, state senators tend to become U.S. Representatives, U.S. Representatives and celebrities win U.S. Senate races, lieutenant governors become governors—but does anyone really know what lieutenant governors, etc.,

have "accomplished"?) One might try to quantify name recognition (if this hasn't already been done) in lower-level races, or one might do survey research to see if voters use their recognition of a candidate's name as a heuristic indicating a candidate's qualifications for office, along the lines of: "This person must be qualified, I know I've heard of him somewhere...."

11. Whatever Happened to Political Socialization? "Political socialization" was a prominent research agenda before rational choice theory became the new fad in political science. Socialization researchers tried to identify the cultural determinants (family, religion, education, etc.) of people's partisan leanings. Apparently, however, they did not look at deeper questions, such as the cultural determinants of people's "values" and ideology. And now that socialization research has passed out of fashion, nobody is investigating such questions. Yet one of the main responses of public-opinion researchers to the problem of public ignorance has been to show that people have deep-rooted values and ideological convictions that don't waver very much over time. Their idea is that we needn't worry about how uninformed people are about particular issues and candidates as long as they are informed enough to allow their "values" to determine where they should stand on particular issues. But if these values themselves are products of uninformed cultural biases, the stability of these values over time is small comfort. It's amazing but true that political scientists treat "values" as given, leaving socialization into uninformed beliefs—e.g., indoctrination by one's family; or by cumulative exposure to (for example) biased TV programming, movies, and other forms of popular culture; or by various levels of formal education—almost completely unexplored.

Publish or Perish

The following articles by seminar alumni have appeared in *Critical Review*. Alumni—please let us know of writings you've published elsewhere that were influenced by your seminar experience or by reading *Critical Review*.

Adam McCabe '96 (with Jeffrey Friedman), "Preferences or Happiness: Tibor Scitovsky's Psychology of Human Needs," vol. 10, no. 4.

Justin Weinberg '95, "Freedom, Self-Ownership, and Libertarian Philosophical Diaspora" (cited in the new edition of Will Kymlicka's very widely used textbook, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*), vol. 11, no. 3.

Justin Weinberg '95, "Self- and World-Ownership: Rejoinder to Richard Epstein, Tom G. Palmer, and Am Feallsanach," vol. 12, no. 3.

Ilya Somin '97, "Voter Ignorance and the Democratic Ideal," vol. 12, no. 4.

Tom Hoffman '95, "Rationality Reconceived: The Mass Electorate and Democratic Theory," vol. 12, no. 4.

David Ciepley '95, "Democracy Despite Voter Ignorance: A Weberian Reply to Somin and Friedman," vol. 13, nos. 1-2.

Jason Sorens '97, "The Failure to Converge: Why Globalization Doesn't Cause Deregulation," vol. 14, no. 1.

Garett Jones '97, "The 'Free Market' and the Asian Crisis," vol. 14, no. 1.

Ilya Somin '97, "Democracy and Voter Ignorance Revisited: Rejoinder to Ciepley," vol. 14, no. 1.

Sam DeCanio '98, "Bringing the State Back In...Again," vol. 14, nos. 2-3.

Ilya Somin '97, "Do Politicians Pander?" vol. 14, nos. 2-3.

David Ciepley '95, "Why the State Was Dropped in the First Place: A Prequel to Skocpol's 'Bringing the State Back In,'" vol. 14, nos. 2-3.

Sam DeCanio '98, "Beyond Marxist State Theory: State Autonomy in Democratic Societies," vol. 14, nos. 2-3.

Reihan Salam '99, "The Confounding State: Public Ignorance and the Politics of Identity," vol. 14, nos. 2-3.

Reihan Salam '99, "Democracy as Bureaucratic Rule," vol. 15, no. 1 (forthcoming).

Tom Hoffman '95, "The Quiet Desperation of Robert Dahl's (Quiet) Radicalism," vol. 15, no. 1 (forthcoming).

Matt Weinshall '00, "Habermas and Public Ignorance," vol. 15, no. 1 (forthcoming).

Shannon Mayer '98, "The Myth of Black Church Arson," vol. 15, no. 3 (forthcoming).

Seminar Inspires Academic Theses

Many of the students who attend the seminars go on to incorporate ideas they have been exposed to—like public ignorance, state autonomy, and market feedback—into their academic work. Below is a list of theses and dissertations that have been influenced by the Critical Review Seminars.

Sam DeCanio '98, "State Autonomy in Democratic Societies: Asset Forfeiture, Public Opinion, and Government Elites," Ohio State Political Science Ph.D. diss., 2006.

Gabor Gyori '98, "Minority Politics towards Gypsies in Post-communist Hungary," Harvard honors thesis, 1999.

Thomas Hoffman '95, "Toward a Sentimental Civic Liberalism: David Hume

and the Virtues—Rational, Social, and Political," Indiana University Political Science Ph.D. diss., 2005.

Katherine Mangu-Ward '01, "Why It Doesn't Take a Ph.D. to Buy a Pack of Cigarettes," Yale honors thesis, 2002.

Shannon Mayer '98, "A Burning Faith: Church Arsons, Media Framing, and the Politics of Perception," University of Missouri Sociology M.A. thesis, 2000.

Reihan Salam '99, "In the Land of the Blind: Public Ignorance & the Autonomy of the Democratic State," Harvard honors thesis, 2001.

Ilya Somin '97, "Voter Knowledge and Constitutional Change," Harvard Government Ph.D. diss., 2003.

Jason Sorens '95, "The Political Economy of Secessionism: Regional Responses to Globalization," Yale Political Science Ph.D. diss., 2003.

Justin Weinberg '95, "Justice-serving Associations: the Significance of Associations for Political Philosophy," Georgetown Philosophy Ph.D. diss., 2004.

Matt Weinshall '00, "An Empirical Assessment of Habermas's Deliberative Democracy," Harvard honors thesis, 2002.

Chris Wisniewski '99, "Nationalism and Identity in Spielbergian Cinema," Harvard honors thesis, 2001.

A Preview of the New Issue of *Critical Review*

By Samuel DeCanio '98

The latest double issue of *Critical Review* (vol. 14, nos. 2-3) takes up a central theme of the summer seminars and develops it in print for the first time: the idea that the public's ignorance of government actions may be an enormous source of "autonomy" that bureaucrats, politicians, and judges—the personnel of the "state"—can use to pursue their own personal and ideological agendas.

In the 1980's, a number of prominent scholars, led by Harvard's Theda Skocpol, published a controversial book, *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge University Press), heralding a new recognition that the state can, in theory, attain autonomy from "society," whose interests the state is supposed to serve. But the "autonomous state" movement fizzled, as it was unable to apply itself to modern, democratic states. It's one thing for a militarily powerful and financially independent king to impose

his will on "society"; but when society controls the purse-strings and names the governors through democratic elections, how can the state be autonomous anymore?

The premise of the new double is-



sue on state autonomy is that in modern democracies, public ignorance allows bureaucrats, politicians, and judges vast leeway for pursuing their own agendas, not only personal but

ideological. Seminar alumni including myself (now at Ohio State), Ilya Somin (Harvard), David Ciepley (University of Chicago), and Reihan Salam (*The New Republic*) use the idea of public-ignorance induced state autonomy to, respectively, criticize Marxist state theory; consider the conduct of contemporary political campaigns; dissect recent political scientists' view of the state; and analyze states' use of ethnic identity for manipulative purposes. The double issue also includes two critiques of the idea that states' actions serve the economic ends of interest groups; a pathbreaking analysis of how lobbyists use their clients' ignorance of government policy to gain an autonomous role in policy making; and Earl Ravenal's magisterial consideration of state autonomy in the international arena.

Invitations have been issued to Skocpol and other "state theorists" to respond in a future issue of *Critical Review* to this attempt to revive their theory in a new way. Cambridge University Press has expressed interest in republishing the *Critical Review* debate on state autonomy in book form.

We need your help!

Currently the Alumni Association is being subsidized by *Critical Review*—which really can't afford it. But somebody has to pay for setting up our web site, printing this newsletter, and mailing it. Please consider making a donation to the Critical Review Foundation, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) educational institution (donations are tax deductible), to help defray the costs of the Alumni Association and to support the continuation of the summer seminars and the publication of *Critical Review*. You can also use this form to keep the Alumni Association informed of your current address. Address changes will also be used by *Critical Review* to ensure that your lifetime subscription continues uninterrupted.

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