



TOBIN PROJECT UPDATE

2017

Tobin Convenes Scholars at a Conference on the *History of American Democracy* in Cambridge, MA

The state of American politics has caused many to express concern that American democracy is in crisis. Yet the United States has long grappled with the tensions inherent to democracy. Do contemporary concerns indicate that our democracy is in fact in serious jeopardy, or do they reflect the frictions and ups and downs that have defined America’s political system from its earliest days?

The Tobin Project’s *Institutions of Democracy* initiative is working to establish a field on the History of American Democracy that investigates how Americans have addressed—and sometimes exacerbated—the challenges of democratic governance. We hope that this

research will contribute to our understanding of the institutions, practices, and social values that have shaped American democracy over time and better equip both policymakers and the public to effectively address the problems facing our country today.

To begin to create a community of scholars in this field, the Tobin Project assembled nearly fifty academics for a conference on the *History of American Democracy* in Cambridge, MA last June. The event featured seven panels, each exploring an institution integral to the development of American democracy, with a particular emphasis on institutions not frequently recognized for their role in shaping our sociopolitical landscape. By bringing

together leading scholars from a range of disciplines, the Tobin Project sought to signal the breadth of its aims for the *History of American Democracy* and facilitate scholarly exchange capable of grappling with the nuanced and complex history of democracy in America. These conversations aimed to identify productive directions for future research, and several conference participants are now collaborating on a series of working papers that we hope to publish on our website later this year. We are very encouraged by this initial progress and look forward to further building this field in the years to come.

Participants Respond to the Conference:

“The *History of American Democracy* potentially embraces topics that people across a wide range of disciplines are working on or know about. Yet these people often don’t know one another. By bringing them together, making them aware of each other, and helping to identify questions they could pursue, I think the Tobin Project could really stimulate the development of the new field.”
—Eric Hilt (*Professor of Economics, Wellesley College*)

“I thought the event was a tremendous success, and the enthusiasm for the topic and the framework for discussion established by Tobin was palpable.”
—William Novak (*Charles F. and Edith J. Clyne Professor of Law, University of Michigan Law School*)



↑ At Tobin’s conference on the *History of American Democracy*, Laura Edwards (*Peabody Family Professor of History, Duke University*) speaks on a panel with Maggie McKinley (*Assistant Professor of Law, University of Pennsylvania Law School*) and Daniel Carpenter (*Allie S. Freed Professor of Government, Harvard University; Director, Social Sciences Program at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study*).

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- Scholars meet with GAO officials on *Preventing Regulatory Capture*
- Tobin facilitates new research on threat assessments from the early nuclear era
- Tobin announces a prize for innovative research on economic inequality and its effects on individual behavior

Conference Panels Investigate a Wide Range of Democratic Institutions

Petitioning

What role did petitioning play in American democracy?

PANELISTS:

- Daniel Carpenter (*Allie S. Freed Professor of Government, Harvard University; Director, Social Sciences Program at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study*)
- Laura Edwards (*Peabody Family Professor of History, Duke University*)
- Maggie McKinley (*Assistant Professor of Law, University of Pennsylvania Law School*)
- Kyle Volk (*Associate Professor of History, University of Montana*)

Panelists presented preliminary research exploring the largely-forgotten practice of petitioning at different levels and across the branches of government in early America. These studies considered how individuals and groups used petitions to voice their interests and, in some cases, influence democratic outcomes, ranging from disenfranchised women who appealed to local courts with property disputes to a nineteenth-century community of black men and women who called on the Pennsylvania state legislature to resist fugitive slave capture. In a conversation with conference attendees, panelists also discussed how petitioning campaigns contributed to the growth and success of social movements, and they reflected on how scholarship can most effectively study petitioning's effects on the democratic process.

Antitrust Law

Was antitrust law created and used to solve problems of democracy (beyond market efficiency) and if so, was it effective?

PANELISTS:

- William J. Novak (*Charles F. and Edith J. Clyne Professor of Law, University of Michigan Law School*)
- Daniel Crane (*Frederick Paul Furth Sr. Professor of Law, University of Michigan Law School*)
- Richard R. John (*Professor of History and Communications, Columbia University*)

- K. Sabeel Rahman (*Assistant Professor of Law, Brooklyn Law School*)
- Laura Phillips Sawyer (*Assistant Professor of Business Administration, Harvard Business School*)

Research projects for this panel examined antitrust law at various points in American history, paying particular attention to how advocates for these laws sought to change American democracy. Panelists traced the development of antitrust from pre-Sherman Act antimonopoly movements to the Celler-Kefauver Act of 1950, exploring how these laws created or disrupted concentrations of political and economic power. Audience members posed questions on a range of related issues, including the relationship between antitrust and labor and the capacity of antitrust to balance public and private power in a democracy.

The Press

When and why have privately-owned, for-profit press organizations functioned as a check on special interest influence on public policy?

PANELISTS:

- Richard R. John (*Professor of History and Communications, Columbia University*)
- Jeffrey L. Pasley (*Professor of History and Journalism, University of Missouri*)
- Michael Stamm (*Associate Professor of History, Michigan State University*)
- Heidi Tworek (*Assistant Professor of International History, University of British Columbia*)



↑ Heidi Tworek (*Assistant Professor of International History, University of British Columbia*) prepares for a panel on Teaching American Democracy and its History.

Participating scholars presented preliminary research that examined the role of the press throughout American history, ranging from the partisan press of the early republic to investigative journalism in the early to mid-twentieth century. These studies explored how factors such as ownership, professional norms, and readership contributed to the press's willingness and ability to counter special interest influence on our democracy. Following the presentations, panelists and audience members discussed the importance of studying local news sources and considered how press historians can accurately identify causal links between press coverage and political outcomes.

Teaching American Democracy and its History

PANELISTS:

- Heidi Tworek (*Assistant Professor of International History, University of British Columbia*)
- Brian Balogh (*Dorothy Danforth Compton Professor at the Miller Center; Professor of History, University of Virginia*)
- David Moss (*Paul Whiton Cherington Professor of Business Administration, Harvard Business School; Founder of the Tobin Project*)
- Mark Wilson (*Professor of History, University of North Carolina at Charlotte*)

Panelists reflected on their teaching experiences in a discussion examining whether and how the history of American democracy should be taught in universities. Panelists and discussants considered a number of questions, including how best to convey lessons from academic research to students, which political, economic, social, and cultural institutions should be covered in history of American democracy courses, and how instructors can effectively convey the ways that democracy functions as an evolving set of institutions rather than a fixed or static mechanism. Panelists and audience members also discussed various pedagogical tools, such as case studies, that allow teachers to engage students in the study and practice of democracy.

The Tobin Project Begins Work on *When Democracy Breaks*

In addition to our work exploring the practices and institutions that allow our democracy to survive and flourish, the Tobin Project is currently working with leading scholars to produce a timely book that examines the conditions and factors that can lead to democratic collapse. The book, tentatively titled *When Democracy Breaks*, will investigate democratic failures through historical analysis with the aim of identifying how democratic failure might manifest today. Edited by Archon Fung (*Academic Dean and Winthrop Laflin McCormack Professor of Citizenship and Self-Government, Harvard Kennedy School*), David Moss (*Paul Whiton Cherington Professor of Business Administration, Harvard Business School*), and Arne Westad (*S.T. Lee Professor of U.S.-Asia Relations, Harvard Kennedy School*), this volume will comprise a series of cases focused on specific historical episodes, spanning from ancient Athens to present-day Turkey. In a recent conversation with Tobin, Professor

Westad shared his thoughts about the importance and goals of the project:

Q: Given contemporary anxieties surrounding this topic, what do you hope will be the volume's impact?

A: What I hope is that we will have a more level-headed approach to this debate than what I see at present. The easy use of historical analogies, mostly alarmist or catastrophic, may not be the best way of understanding what is happening. I think the remedy against that is to figure out how we can learn from these past cases, and particularly how we can learn what went wrong, because the degradation of democracy—or pluralism or public participation in politics—is always a process.



↑ Arne Westad, S.T. Lee Professor of U.S.-Asia Relations at the Harvard Kennedy School.

Q: How will the case-based structure influence your approach to the volume?

A: I hope that will enable us to look more in-depth at these processes of deterioration of democratic practices. This is where I think the strength of the case method and of the book really is: it puts you in a position where you can actually think about what could have been done differently to predicate a different outcome.

Q: What other lessons do you think the volume will impart?

A: While searching questions of the past, be prepared for unexpected and sometimes entirely unintended outcomes and learn to think about the choices that people make in a less uniform context.

David Moss's *History of American Democracy* High School Project Continues to Grow

In 2013, David Moss debuted his *History of American Democracy* course, developed for Harvard undergraduates and business school students with assistance from the Tobin Project. The course, which quickly became among the highest rated at Harvard, concentrates on decisive moments in American history and requires students to analyze and debate choices faced by key decision makers over time. Based on its success at the undergraduate level, Professor Moss and a team at Harvard Business School have adapted the course for high school students and introduced it to high schools throughout the country. The program has expanded each year since its inception in 2015, and the Tobin Project remains encouraged by the enthusiastic feedback shared by teachers and students alike.

HIGH SCHOOL PROJECT	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Number of participating high schools	12	40	79
Number of participating teachers	21	72	150
Number of states represented (including D.C.)	6	11	18
Estimated students reached per year	500	2000	3500

Tobin's Future in Case-Based Teaching

Motivated by the success of Professor Moss's course on the *History of American Democracy*, which uses the case method to engage students in critical thinking about vital problems and episodes in American history, the Tobin Project is now exploring other opportunities for the development of new pedagogical cases based on rigorous research. There is growing confidence at Tobin that case-based teaching has immense potential to encourage problem-oriented thinking and research among students and scholars alike. In addition to our work on the *History of American Democracy*, our projects on *When Democracy Breaks* and *Reassessing Threat Assessment* feature new research that could be translated into high-quality pedagogical cases. Looking forward, we are eager to pursue the possibility of case development and to explore the potential of case-based pedagogy with interested scholars across our network.

Tobin Partners with the Radcliffe Institute for a Meeting on *Preventing Regulatory Capture* including Scholars, Representatives of NGOs, Practitioners, and Policymakers from the Government Accountability Office

In December, the Tobin Project and the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study co-sponsored a workshop focused on detecting and preventing special interest capture of financial regulation. Building on the findings in Tobin's 2013 volume *Preventing Regulatory Capture*, the workshop brought together scholars, regulators, and other practitioners to discuss special interest influence and how to limit it. Organized by volume co-editor Daniel Carpenter (*Allie S. Freed Professor of Government, Harvard University; Director,*

Social Sciences Program at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study), the workshop also included broader conversations about fruitful areas for new research on capture that could help distinguish instances of productive government regulation from moments when regulation falters.

To open the workshop, the U.S. Government Accountability Office presented a new report on the capture of financial regulatory bodies that was influenced by *Preventing Regulatory*

Capture. Their presentation served as a valuable starting point for discussions of promising ideas and results, as well as possible directions for new work aimed at measuring and preventing special interest influence over financial regulation through both rulemaking and enforcement. We are encouraged by the sustained focus on this topic from both scholars and government officials and look forward to facilitating additional research and discussion on how best to prevent capture in its various forms.

Corporations and American Democracy Reaches Academic and Legal Audiences

In April 2017, the Tobin Project published *Corporations and American Democracy*, the first book-length account of the corporation's role in American democracy from the Founding Era to the present.

Inspired by recent debates on corporate rights and responsibilities, the volume seeks to place the corporation in its historical context with the hope of informing jurisprudence, legislation, and public discourse. The introduction, which includes an overview of the volume, is available for free download on the Tobin Project website.

In an effort to reach a broad audience of scholars, policymakers, and legal practitioners, the Tobin Project has held a series of events to promote the volume, including panel

discussions at Columbia Law School, the American Bar Foundation, and the Brookings Institution. Led by the volume's editors, Naomi R. Lamoreaux (*Stanley B. Resor Professor of Economics and History, Yale University*) and William J. Novak (*Charles F. and Edith J. Clyne Professor of Law, University of Michigan Law School*), these discussions engaged groups ranging from undergraduates and historians to lawyers and policymakers, all interested in how corporations have interacted with

American democracy. We hope that the volume will continue to generate additional scholarly engagement with the role corporations have played throughout American history and provide critical guidance and insight to lawmakers, practitioners, and the public.



↑ Contributors to *Corporations and American Democracy* share their insights from the volume at the Brookings Institution in November.

[READ THE INTRODUCTION ONLINE](#)

tobinproject.org/books-papers/corporations-american-democracy

Scholars Develop Projects from Tobin's 2016 Conference on *Inequality and Decision Making*

The Tobin Project's 2016 Conference on *Inequality and Decision Making* convened leading scholars from across the social and behavioral sciences to explore the effects of economic inequality on individual decision making. The event featured seventeen innovative pilot projects, which received constructive feedback and generated significant enthusiasm among the scholars in attendance. Several projects used experimental methods to investigate how economic inequality influences individual behavior, and the insights that emerged and the feedback provided at the conference encouraged many scholars to further develop their research in 2017.

Jazmin Brown-Iannuzzi (*Assistant Professor of Social Psychology, University of Kentucky*) published her paper on "The Relationship Between Mental Representations of Welfare Recipients and Attitudes Toward Welfare" in the January 2017 issue of *Psychological Science*. She shared with Tobin that she enjoyed the "multi-disciplinary approach" of the conference. The conference discussions helped her "think through potential interventions aimed at eliminating the link between racial stereotypes and preferences for specific redistributive policies," which has informed her current

research on stereotypes related to work ethic and welfare recipients. For Stéphane Côté (*Professor of Organizational Behaviour, Rotman School of Management, University of Toronto*), the conference helped develop a more nuanced understanding of the "different ways to conceptualize and operationalize inequality," particularly for his inquiry into how socioeconomic status relates to feelings of entitlement regarding certain resources and privileges.

This past summer, Beth Truesdale (*Sloan Postdoctoral Fellow, Center for Population and Development Studies at Harvard University*)



↑ Beth Truesdale shares her feedback during a presentation of new research at the Tobin Project's 2016 conference on *Inequality and Individual Decision Making*.

completed one of the chapters of her dissertation on the effects of economic inequality on health over the life course, based on the paper she presented at the conference. She credits the conference with providing her with the opportunity to "give a first airing of an early-stage project to an audience that was both friendly and critical" and develop a network of peers working on inequality with whom she could collaborate and exchange feedback.

Paul Connor (*Doctoral Student in Social-Personality Psychology, University of California, Berkeley*) is preparing to submit for publication his paper on the social-cognitive effects of exposure to income inequality that he workshopped at the Tobin conference. He shared, "the 2016 conference provided me not only with access to cutting-edge research and interesting theoretical and methodological contributions from scholars in different fields, but also the opportunity to make valuable and lasting beneficial connections with researchers whose skill sets and knowledge complement my own." We are eager to see these projects and those by the other conference participants continue to develop and help shape the field.

A Prize for Exemplary Work on Inequality and Decision Making

The Tobin Project is currently accepting submissions for an Inequality and Decision Making Prize. Following the success of our 2016 Conference on *Inequality and Decision Making*—which featured seventeen innovative pilot projects selected from nearly one hundred submissions—we are seeking to continue encouraging and highlighting promising new research that employs novel approaches to the study of inequality and has the potential to forge a deeper understanding of how inequality affects our democracy, economy, and society more broadly. All junior scholars who have completed their graduate studies (post-doctoral fellows through assistant professors) are eligible, and we are welcoming submissions that draw on any discipline or methodology. Submissions will be reviewed by the Tobin Project and our blue-ribbon Prize Selection Committee.

SUBMIT TO THE 2018 INEQUALITY PRIZE:

<https://www.tobinproject.org/research-inquiry/inequality/2018prize>

PRIZE SELECTION COMMITTEE

- Nancy Adler (*Lisa and John Pritzker Professor of Medical Psychology, University of California, San Francisco*)
- Marianne Bertrand (*Chris P. Dialynas Distinguished Service Professor of Economics, University of Chicago Booth School of Business*)
- Christopher Sandy Jencks (*Malcolm Wiener Professor of Social Policy, Harvard Kennedy School*)

Scholars Workshop New Research Reassessing Threat Assessments from the Early Nuclear Era



↑ Participants at the Tobin Project's October workshop on threat assessment from the early nuclear era.

The Tobin Project's *Reassessing Threat Assessment* inquiry seeks to build understanding of the practices and processes that yield accurate and reliable assessments of strategic threats to American national security. In 2017, we launched new work to re-evaluate strategic assessments primarily from the twenty-five years following the development of the first nuclear weapons. By identifying assessment successes and failures from a period of great geopolitical and technological uncertainty, we hope to discern lessons that can inform additional scholarship and the evaluation of current threats to American national security.

In March, the Tobin Project gathered fifteen scholars at the MIT Center for International

Studies to propose and discuss new research projects and receive feedback from their colleagues. The discussion was led by initiative co-chairs Jeremi Suri (*Mack Brown Distinguished Chair for Leadership in Global Affairs, University of Texas, Austin*), Benjamin Valentino (*Associate Professor of Government, Dartmouth College*), and Arne Westad (*S.T. Lee Professor of U.S.-Asia Relations, Harvard Kennedy School*). In the months following the March meeting, participants continued to develop their projects with support and suggestions from the Tobin Project. In October, Tobin held a



↑ Tobin Project *National Security* co-chairs Benjamin Valentino and Arne Westad talk between meeting sessions with Scott Sagan (*Caroline S.G. Munro Professor of Political Science, Stanford University*).

workshop where these scholars were able to present early-stage results from their projects and receive feedback from a group of thirty political scientists and historians.

Among the scholars who workshopped projects, Alexander Lanoszka (*Lecturer in International Politics, City, University of London*) shared his research comparing American and British assessments of the Soviet Union's attempts to develop an atomic bomb in the 1940s. Nicholas Miller (*Assistant Professor of Government, Dartmouth College*) evaluated American efforts to assess the proliferation intentions of other great powers during the early years of the Cold War. Brendan Green (*Assistant Professor of Political Science, University of Cincinnati*) analyzed the Nixon Administration's decision to pursue qualitative improvements to nuclear delivery systems in the late 1960s and early 1970s, during a period of arms buildup by both the United States and the Soviet Union. Many of the participants commented on the focus and rigor of the projects presented at the workshop, and there is considerable enthusiasm as the projects move towards publication.

Sustainable Security Discussed in Washington, D.C.

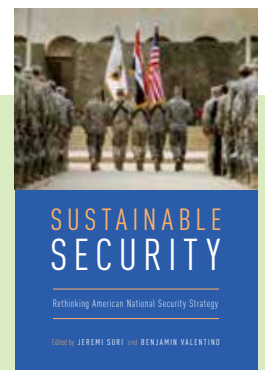
Following the December 2016 publication of *Sustainable Security: Rethinking American National Security Strategy*, the Tobin Project held events to disseminate the volume's findings to scholars and policymakers. Featuring contributions from fifteen security scholars, economists, historians, and political scientists, the volume considers how the United States can craft a viable security program in the face of changing risks, resource constraints, and a shifting international balance of power. Panel discussions at the Cato Institute and the University of Texas at Austin Lyndon B. Johnson Washington Center brought together scholars and policymakers to discuss insights from the volume with editors Jeremi Suri and Benjamin Valentino. The response from scholars and policymakers has been highly encouraging, and we hope the volume will continue to serve as a guide for research and policy going forward.

Praise for *Sustainable Security*:

"[A] most useful volume of essays for students and observers alike,

not only those concerned with security studies but also those with an eye to global geopolitics and economics, such is the breadth and importance of the issues tackled."

—Julian Richards (*Senior Lecturer, University of Buckingham; Co-Director, Centre for Security and Intelligence Studies at the University of Buckingham*), *Economic Affairs*, June 2017



📖 READ THE INTRODUCTION & CONCLUSION ONLINE

tobinproject.org/books-papers/sustainable-security

Graduate Student Programming Creates Opportunities to Discuss Problem-Oriented Research across Tobin's Initiatives

In addition to our work with senior scholars, Tobin engages with top graduate students to facilitate and support their pursuit of problem-oriented research. Our graduate student programming seeks to create a venue for the next generation of scholars to share their research and consider its potential impact alongside other public-minded graduate students from a range of disciplines and institutions. This year, the Tobin Project organized three graduate student meetings to further these goals.

In April and September, the Tobin Project hosted Graduate Student Workshops, which brought small numbers of promising graduate students to Cambridge to present new work and receive interdisciplinary feedback and research advice from peers and members of the Tobin staff. Altogether, fifteen graduate students whose dissertations align with at least one of Tobin's four core research initiatives were selected to participate. In June, we held our Prospectus Development Workshop, which connected mid-program doctoral students with Tobin staff and alumni of Tobin's Graduate Student Workshops to discuss and critique participants' dissertation prospectuses and provide input on crafting a compelling dissertation question. We hope that by introducing new graduate students to Tobin's criteria for effective research questions, we are able to encourage work that addresses important, real-world problems. This year's prospectus workshop included nine students from across the country who are studying a range of topics related to Tobin's principal research initiatives.

Tobin is currently accepting applications to our 2018 Graduate Student Workshops, which will each be organized around a specific Tobin inquiry. In April, our *National Security* initiative will bring together graduate students conducting research with the potential to help illuminate the processes and principles that contribute to accurate, reliable threat assessments. Later next spring, Tobin's *Institutions of Democracy* initiative will convene students from a range of disciplines to consider how different institutions, mechanisms, and social norms have shaped American democracy over time. To learn more about these programs and how to apply, please visit the Tobin Project website.

Graduate Students Reflect on Their Workshops

"I loved the opportunity to read other people's work and engage with them in detailed discussions of our projects. In grad school, your work is rather self-contained, and it is rare to find opportunities like the GSW where a group of peers can close read your project and discuss it for over an hour."

—Marc Grinberg (*Ph.D. candidate in Political Science, Stanford University*)



↑ Participants in Tobin's September Graduate Student Workshop share feedback on each other's projects.

Apply to Our Graduate Student Workshops

NATIONAL SECURITY

tobinproject.org/sites/tobinproject.org/files/assets/security%20workshop.pdf

HISTORY OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

tobinproject.org/sites/tobinproject.org/files/assets/democracy%20workshop.pdf

Mission Statement

The Tobin Project is a catalyst for transformative research in the social sciences. The mission of the Tobin Project is to mobilize, motivate, and support a community of scholars across the social sciences and allied fields seeking to deepen our understanding of significant challenges facing the nation over the long term. Toward this end, the Tobin Project aims to identify and pursue questions that, if addressed with rigorous scholarly research, could have the greatest potential to benefit society and to unlock doors within the academy to new and vital lines of inquiry.

Opportunities at Tobin

The Tobin Project is looking for talented and motivated individuals to join our team as Research Analysts and Case Writers. Research Analysts work on a range of projects related to our four core initiatives to generate rigorous social science research aimed at solving important problems facing society, and Case Writers work to create related pedagogical cases and teaching materials.

Tobin is accepting applications from top-performing professionals, recent graduates, graduate students, and undergraduates. We are looking for individuals who possess excellent research and writing skills as well as project management experience. Interested candidates can learn more about the position and application process on the Opportunities page of our website. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to opportunities@tobinproject.org.

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