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I. EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT

Education:

Ph.D., Political Science, West Virginia University, December 2004.
M.A., Political Science, West Virginia University, September, 2001.
J.D., West Virginia University, 1993.
B.A., Political Science, West Virginia University, 1990.

Fields of Expertise:

Law & Courts	American Politics
Political Theory	Ludwig Wittgenstein

Universities Employed:

- Wright State University (WSU) (September 1, 2008 – current)
  Full Professor with tenure, (August 1, 2019 – current)
  Associate Professor with tenure (August 1, 2013 – July 31, 2019)
  Assistant Professor (tenure track) (September 1, 2008 – July 31, 2013)
- The Pennsylvania State University (PSU) (July 2005-July 2008)
  3-year teaching appointment
- The University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) (August 2004-May 2005)
  1-year teaching appointment
- Frostburg State University (FSU) (August 2003 – May 2004)
  Adjunct while in graduate school
- West Virginia University (WVU) (August 2001 – May 2004)
  Graduate teaching

Legal Employment:

- Sole Practitioner (October 1994 - June 30, 2004): Operated a legal practice primarily concentrated in the areas of criminal defense and domestic relations. Also handled personal injury cases, medical malpractice, employment discrimination, miscellaneous civil cases and transactions in real estate and social security disability. Practice was limited exclusively to criminal defense from July 2000 - July 2004.

Teaching Awards:

- Nominated, COLA Outstanding Teacher Award (2018)
- Outstanding Teacher Award (2017), National Society of Leadership and Success (NSLS).

Significant Service

- Pre-law Advisor (Fall, 2017-Spring 2023; Fall 2024-present);
- Faculty Senate (2012-2013 & 2017-2018);
- Department Undergraduate Committee Chair (2017 - 2022);
- AAUP-WSU Executive Committee (2016-2018);
- Faculty Senate Budget Priorities Committee (2018-2019)
- Chair, American Politics Search Committee (2015)

Honors:

- Graduated, Ph.D., (GPA 3.87) (December, 2004)
- Graduated, B.A., Summa Cum Laude (GPA 3.8) (1990).
- Member, Golden Key National Honor Society (1990).
- Awarded a summer fellowship with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1992. (Worked on discrimination litigation under the supervision of Franklin D. Cleckley, a nationally recognized professor of law at West Virginia University, author of several legal treatises and former member of the West Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals).
- Victorious in several multi-count felony jury trials involving unanimous twelve-person juries in both the state and federal courts. Also won cases at the West Virginia State Supreme Court of Appeals.

II. TEACHING

Prepared to Teach:

Law & Courts/Legal Studies

- Constitutional Law/Development
- American Civil Liberties/Development
- Judicial Process/Legal System
- Supreme Court Politics
- Crime, Prosecution & the System
- Jurisprudence & Legal Theory

American Politics & Philosophy

- American Government
- American Politics
- The Presidency
- Struggle for Civil Rights in America
- Wittgenstein & Post Analytic Thought
- Concepts in Political Theory
- American Political Development

1. American Constitutional Law/Development I (powers of government).

Course focuses on the theory, history and, design of government power. Has a developmental concern: begins with the English revolution, moves toward framing period, and then examines the ascendancy of the federal organ and the evolution of the governing institutions.

2. Modern Developments in Legal Theory

Course explores trends in legal philosophy. Specific emphasis upon originalism (all variants), Wittgenstein and Law, Dworkinian thought and critical legal studies.

3. American Civil Liberties (rights of individuals).

Course focuses on "fundamental liberty" as manifested in the American Constitution. Course is developmental at first: the construction of the liberty state from the American founding through FDR. After this, it becomes categorical: examines discreet areas -- speech, religion, equal protection, etc.

4. The American Judicial Process/Law and the Legal System.

Very unique course. Students are taught about trial judging, procedure and basic legal transactions from a participatory perspective. Using hypotheticals, simulations and rules, students learn about evidence, procedure, common legal issues, how trial judging occurs, and the basic rules of torts, contracts, family law and criminal law/procedure.

5. Crime, Prosecution and The System.

Course focuses exclusively on criminal law and procedure. Subjects include: the definition of crime and defense, how lawyers defend the accused, discovery and procedure, trial judging, famous criminal trials, public defenders, prosecutors and sentencing systems.

6. The American Presidency.

Course is broken into three parts: (1) historical development (creation of the modern presidency through FDR); (2) institutional framework (resources, capacity, selection, decision making.); and (3) legal (the constitutional power).

7. The Struggle for Civil Rights in America.

The struggle of various groups to attain the promise of the American experiment. Covers race, gender, sexual orientation, native North Americans, religious non-conformists, immigrants, illegal aliens, labor and even the fetus and animal rights. As these stories are told, students consider what causes success in political movements and what role courts play in the struggle.

8. American Government

Focuses is upon the institutions of American government and their development, their creation and how they evolved. By the end of the course, students consider whether different institutions or processes (including election systems) would work better. Has America outgrown its plan of government?

9. Parties, Elections and Campaigns

Analysis of the forces that aggregate American politics -- parties, elections, voting, campaigns and ideology. The benefits and shortcomings of democratic theory are explored in detail. Strong developmental emphasis, showing how and why American democracy came about.

10. Issues/Development in American Politics

This course develops American politics from the founding through to modernity. Special attention is paid to philosophy and development of economic issues (taxes, spending, budgets, banking, and approaches to capitalism). After developmental sequence ends, course looks at specific issues: race, gender, Trump & information bubbles.

11. Ludwig Wittgenstein and Post-Analytic Thought

Ludwig Wittgenstein, his life, psychology, ideas and significance. Course teaches "skills" used by Wittgenstein, which are then put to use in selected topics in philosophy, science and social science. Students learn of Wittgenstein's influence upon intellectual culture.

12. Supreme Court Politics/Legal Judging

Course focuses on how justices should decide (jurisprudence) and how they do decide (behaviorism). The first half is the development of legal justification in American culture, and the second half is an examination of the empirical evidence about judicial decision making, culminating in a theoretical model that tries to harmonize philosophy with empiricism. Course has a multidisciplinary focus.

III. RESEARCH AGENDA

Research Agenda: Since 2008, rigorous work in legal and political theory. Before that, a quantitative agenda that was statistically modeling the "Dworkin effect" upon Supreme Court decision making.

Philosophy of God and How Jesus Fits

Abstract:

New book manuscript seeking a publisher

This is a multidisciplinary work involving the fields of philosophy, history, religious studies, medical science and politics. It provides new thinking in philosophy of God. Building upon key insights from Paul Tillich, Ludwig Wittgenstein and John Shelby Spong, the work shows why the idea of God remains rational in our current age. The book solves nagging problems such as why God or devils never honestly appear in life, why horrible evils afflict our existence and what a soul is.

The book also offers a sober reimagination of the Christian memory. Using a unique method of investigation, it shows that the ethical teachings of Jesus are academically novel and represent a compelling account of how humans of any persuasion should treat one another; and that the point is not to idolize any person or event in human history as a litmus. Most importantly, the book replaces the troubling aristocratic story-arc in high Christology that sees God having a son, resulting in a three person "trinity," with a new solution that keenly harvests tools in philosophy of mind.

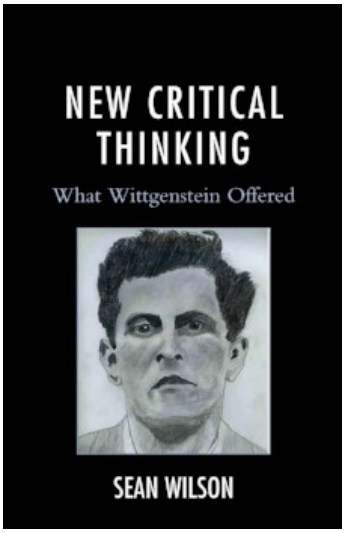
The spirit of this book is to rescue Jesus from his churches and show how both atheists and evangelicals get fundamental things wrong. Wrestled away from the orthodox, Jesus becomes an endearing and needed complement to a God story that we all need.

New Critical Thinking: What Wittgenstein Offered

Abstract:

Published by Lexington Books, a division of Rowman and Littlefield (2018).

Paperback (2020)



Ludwig Wittgenstein changed everything. To understand how, we need to understand what he did to the subject of critical reasoning. Wittgenstein didn't leave us "philosophy"; he left a pathway for a more perspicuous intellect. This was caused by a psychological condition that made him meticulous and hypersensitive. He could abnormally perceive three natural phenomena: (a) the social traits implicated in word use; (b) the task-functions signified in communication; and (c) the pictures that flash before the mind's eye. With this unique acuity, he showed us how post-analytic thinking was to occur.

And this discovery changes everything. It revolutionizes how we must argue with one another and what we believe is "true." Instead of focusing primarily upon premises or facts, we must point people to how their intellect behaves during a speech act—something called "therapy." And this has radical implications for analysis, conceptual investigation, value judgments, political ideology, ethics and even religion. Written for a lay and special audience, and for all fields of study, this book is both an explanation of, and a blueprint for, the new critical thinking.

- For years Wittgensteinian philosophers have wanted to see a movement away from exegesis toward the application of Wittgenstein's way of dealing with problems to new areas. Wilson's book promises to make a contribution to this effort. The book is blazing a trail of its own, which is its great strength. To the extent that

Wilson has not only been a pioneer but also got Wittgenstein right, this is an excellent achievement. (Duncan Richter, Virginia Military Institute).

- Sean Wilson's new book offers some of the clearest insights into Wittgenstein's later thoughts that I have come across. By clearly explaining three facets of Wittgenstein's problem-solving "therapy," Wilson is able to neatly put important—but often confusing—ideas into a coherent and helpful form. I highly recommend this book to any reader, not just the career philosopher. It may just change the way you view the world. (Ian Bartrum, William S. Boyd School of Law, UNLV).
- In his book Sean Wilson has devoted himself to an important task rarely undertaken by Wittgenstein scholars: rather than limiting himself to interpreting Wittgenstein's thought or bringing it to bear on philosophical problems, he has explored ways in which Wittgenstein's insights can be employed in the clarification of many kinds of intellectual entanglements, within various academic disciplines, in legal argument, political and cultural debate and everyday interchange. (Lars Hertzberg, Åbo Akademi University).

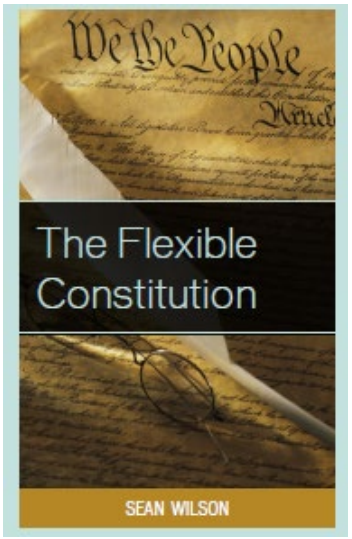
Reviews: https://www.nordicwittgensteinreview.com/article/view/3552

The Flexible Constitution

Abstract:

This is an ambitious work on constitutional theory. Influenced by the views of Ludwig Wittgenstein, it shows how a judge can obey a document written in ordinary, flexible language. Whether something is "constitutional" is not an historical fact, but is an artisan judgment. Criteria are set forth showing why some judgments represent superior connoisseurship while others do not.

Along the way, the book offers a potent critique of originalism. It not only coherently explains this belief system, but shows why it is inherently incompatible with the American legal system. Originalism can only be understood as a legal ideology, not an actual philosophy of law. The book overthrows the scholarship of many law professors and even reconstitutes Ronald Dworkin. And the findings also challenge the way that professors of politics often think about whether a judge has "followed law."



Published by Lexington Books, a division of Rowman and Littlefield (2013).

Paperback (2014)

- [This is] an excellent book which advances a new Wittgensteinian theory of constitutional interpretation. *(George Martinez, Southern Methodist University)*
- From Wittgenstein to connoisseur judgment, this book reimagines basic issues in constitutional interpretation. It suggests new forms for understanding ongoing debates and provides new maps for negotiating them. *(John Brigham, University of Massachusetts, Amherst)*
- In The Flexible Constitution, Sean Wilson provides a welcome rebuttal to the modern originalist movement in constitutional theory. In straightforward and elegant prose, Wilson reminds us that ordinary language—which the Constitution certainly purports to employ—cannot provide the kind of determinate meanings that make a strong form of originalism possible. All in all, the book is a philosophically rigorous counterpoint to the often oversimplified national debate about constitutional interpretation. *(Ian Bartrum, William S. Boyd School of Law, UNLV)*
- Wilson places himself among relatively few, including Brigham, who seem to not simply comprehend Wittgenstein but can explain it masterfully. *(Aaron R.S. Lorenz, Ramapo College)*
- The Flexible Constitution brings Wittgenstein's analysis of language-meaning to constitutional theory, showing how many common criticisms of originalism can find their home in that analysis. Its conclusions that constitutional law is best seen through an esthetic lens and that connoisseur judgments are central to determining the constitution's meaning opens a provocative line of inquiry that I hope other scholars will follow. *(Mark Tushnet, William Nelson Cromwell Professor of Law, Harvard Law School)*
- Sean Wilson's clearly-written and lucidly organized book demonstrates the failings of originalist theory. His major contribution is in his use of the concept of "connoisseur judgment," which he draws from Wittgenstein's aesthetics to show how the ordinary language of the Constitution can and should be interpreted. I find his conclusion compelling: originialism is a distraction from the proper goal of cultivating connoisseur judgment. *(Francis J. Mootz III, University of the Pacific)*

- Law and Politics Book Review: http://www.lpbr.net/2013/12/the-flexible-constitution.html & *Author response: http://www.lpbr.net/2013/12/authors-response-flexible-constitution.html*
- More reviews: http://drwilson.squarespace.com/reviews/

Introducing Pastology in Philosophy of Law

SSRN Working Paper: August 2018

- To be re-worked into my law and ideology book project

Abstract:

Scholars of legal theory must stop using the phrase “original meaning” when suggesting how we should read undefined legal text. Instead, the term “pastology” or “pastological exegesis” should be used. We have an obligation not to mislead our audience. Whenever legal text is undefined and an advocate puts forth a candidate for more specific meaning based upon a marshaling of the past (floor speeches, letters, old dictionaries, etc.), this is an exegetical behavior known in philosophy of law as pastology.

On the Problems of Political Science and the Nonsense of Quantitative Ideology Models

SSRN Working Paper: March 2008

- Presented at MPSA in 2008
- To be re-worked into my law and ideology book project

Abstract:

Quantitative scholars of the Court say that they are engaged in empirical science. Yet, the great majority of works regarded as elite within the political science network are deficient in one fundamentally critical way: they do not generate scientific vocabulary. The key feature of science is that it creates a reductionist vocabulary that rigidly designates some phenomenon in the external world (e.g., water is H_2O). Words like "politics" and "ideology" are not scientific terms. And this causes serious disciplinary problems. If scholars want to scientize their field, they have to begin jargonizing their phenomena of interest in the external world.

Of particular concern are the works that purport to study how ideology influences judicial decision making. These works do not talk honestly about what phenomenon in the external world they are actually observing. They even purport to study something where no counterfactual can exist. Quantitative methods cannot be used to demonstrate that a judge's legal ruling is caused by "ideology" because this is a normative criticism. Science can no more directly observe ideology than it can "integrity" or "virtue."

Quantitative Program (Dormant):

Law as a Cognitive Language Construct; How Constitutional Words Structure Judicial Choices

Conference Paper: 2007, MPSA, Chicago.

- This is a summary of a set of chapters in my dissertation
- To be reworked into my law and ideology book project

Abstract:

This paper offers a new theory of meaning in language philosophy and applies the theory to Supreme Court decision making in the area of selected civil liberties cases. Unlike prior works, this paper theorizes “law” to be something broader than “framer intent” or stare decisis. Law is the effect that language has on the brain (“cognitive linguistics”). Language is theorized to have fluctuating clarity – i.e., to be relatively clear in some instances and unclear in others (depending upon nomenclature). This is called “rigidity.” Building upon the work of Steven Pinker, Ludwig Wittgenstein and Saul Kripke, this paper provides criteria for placing legal-rights claims in an ordinal level of rank, based upon how clearly the Constitution can be said to designate the claims. Using a series of logistic regressions, the paper finds that measures of political ideology are a relatively poor predictor of justices’ votes when law is most rigid, but is a robust predictor of votes when law is most vague or indeterminate. Additionally, the paper finds that only moderate and conservative justices are influenced by language rigidity. This suggests that the decision to use a language construct as a constituence is a choice influenced by political values, but that, paradoxically, the use of this constituence renders the expression of values sub-optimal. That is, values may decide the orthodoxy, but the orthodoxy then makes the outcome less optimal than otherwise. This view is consistent with how proponents of institutionalism view the Court; it is not consistent with either attitudinalism or rational-choice theory, where the latter means only pursuing self-interest in the long run.

The Attitudinal Model, Political Science; Ecological Fallacy and Exaggeration

SSRN Working Paper: August 2006

- Rework of a 2005 conference paper.
- To be reworked into my law and ideology book project

Abstract:

Attitudinal scholars of the Court have long contended that decisions are based primarily upon the ideological beliefs of the justices, and that ideology alone accounts for the bulk of choices made in civil liberties cases. However, this conclusion appears to rest upon the misinterpretation of an ecological regression model. Ecological models do not analyze the votes of justices; they only analyze an index of grouped aggregates. When interpreting model results, however, scholars appear to have equated variation in a voting index with the frequency distribution of binary observations that comprised it. As a result, conclusions about the effect of ideology were exaggerated. This work exposes and corrects this problem by re-estimating the relationship using a multilevel approach with a logistic regression that directly examines the dependent variable prior to its manipulation into grouped data. The findings demonstrate that ideology models lose about two-thirds of the level of explanation researchers previously proclaimed. This new understanding supports a more limited critique of the role that ideology plays on the Court – one that has a long history in political science that predates the more value-dominant “attitudinal” framework.

Political Ideology as a Fluctuating Rather Than Defining Force Upon the Court: An Analysis of Discreet Areas of Civil Liberties Voting

Conference Paper: 2006, MPSA & SPSA

- To be reworked into my law and ideology book project

Abstract:

Recent scholarship demonstrates that measures of ideology play a more limited role in Court decisions than previously thought. This paper adds an important contribution to this finding: measures of ideology are not stable. Rather, they fluctuate significantly across distinct issues of law. This suggests that measures of political values only dominate Court behavior in *some* areas of decision making. Scholars should therefore conceive of political ideology as a *fluctuating* rather than defining force upon the Court – it is sometimes high, sometimes low. Future works should identify other areas of significant fluctuation and should attempt to explain what causes this phenomenon.

The Failure of Instrumentalism: An Analysis of Votes by Conservative Justices in the Area of Core Political Speech.

Conference Paper: 2005, SWPSA, New Orleans.

- To be reworked into my law and ideology book project

Abstract:

This paper examines the voting behavior of justices in the area of "core political speech." It demonstrates that political attitudes as they are measured by empirical researchers do not dominate judicial voting. The paper argues that the reason is because the a priori foundation of the attitudinal model is suspect. That is, there are occasions when justices regard legal text as sufficiently clear and when "principle" is more important than policy preference. When this happens, justices shun strictly ideological voting. Future works should identify other meaningful areas of law that are poorly explained by ideology models.

Dissertation.

The Influence of Legal Language Upon Supreme Court Voting in Civil Liberties Cases
[Reprod. in fac-sim.] / Ann Arbor (Mich.): UMI, cop. 2004.

IV. REFERENCES

For Research:

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