

Theory Section Bylaws

American Sociological Association

Amended 1988, 1997, 2005, 2013, 2018, 2024, 2025

I. Preamble

The purpose of the Theory Section is to support scholarship in social theory within sociology and related disciplines. The Section sponsors an annual program (in conjunction with the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association). It also sponsors a newsletter, awards scholarly prizes, supports the teaching of theory in sociology, and supports and occasionally sponsors additional scholarly meetings. The Section seeks to be a forum where a variety of theoretical approaches can meet and where the full range of theoretical questions can be addressed.

II. Membership and Dues

The membership of the Section is open to any member of the American Sociological Association, without regard to the classification of their membership status, who wishes to participate in the Section and who pays annual Section dues.

Dues shall be set by Section officers in accord with the requirements of the American Sociological Association.

III. Annual Meeting

An Annual Business Meeting of section members shall be held in conjunction with the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association. At least 25 section members shall be present to constitute a quorum.

IV. Officers of the Section

The officers of the Section shall be the Chair, the Chair-Elect, the Past Chair, the Secretary-Treasurer, and eight voting Section Council members. Two of the voting Council members shall be graduate students. In addition, the Newsletter Editor and the Web Site Editor shall be non-voting members of the Council. Officers shall be drawn from members of the Theory Section. The terms of all section officers shall commence on September 1 of the year they were elected.

The Chair-Elect will serve a one-year term in this office and will automatically become Chair in the year following their term as Chair-Elect. The Chair will serve a one-year term in this office. Following this term, the Chair shall serve a one-year term as Past Chair. The Chair and Past Chair will succeed to these offices on September 1.

The Secretary-Treasurer will serve a three-year term in this office.

The six non-student voting Section Council Members will each serve a three-year term in this office. The terms of Section Council Members will be staggered such that two newly-elected Section Council Members rotate onto Section Council each year, while two Section Council Members, having completed their three-year terms, rotate off. Beginning with the spring 2019 election, one graduate-student Section Council Member shall be elected each year, to serve a two-year term.

The Editors of the Section Newsletter and Sociological Theory shall serve as non-voting members of the Section Council.

No member can hold two elective Theory Section offices simultaneously, and no member can succeed themselves in the same elective office. If an officer is elected to another Theory Section office, their prior office shall be declared vacant.

If the offices of Secretary-Treasurer or Section Council Member become vacant prior to the expiration of an elected term, they shall be filled for the unexpired term through appointment by the Chair, subject to confirmation by the other Theory Section officers within two months of the appointment. If the office of the Chair becomes vacant prior to the expiration of an elected term, the Chair-Elect shall complete the term of the Chair, serving as both Chair-Elect and Acting Chair, before succeeding to a one-year term as Chair. If the office of Past Chair becomes vacant, the Chair shall appoint a Past Chair from among previous Section Chairs to serve the unexpired term, subject to confirmation by other Theory Section officers within two months of the appointment. If the office of the Chair-Elect becomes vacant, the Chair shall appoint an Acting Chair-Elect who will serve the remainder of the Chair-Elect term but will not succeed automatically to the office of Chair. If the Chair-Elect vacancy occurs between September 1 and the following election of section officers, that election shall also include the election of a new person to serve as Chair for the term that begins the September 1 that immediately follows. If the Chair-Elect vacancy occurs between the annual election and the September 1, a special election shall be held at the Section Business Meeting to select the person who will become Chair on September 1.

V. Distribution of Powers and Responsibilities

The officers of the Theory Section are vested in principle with the power to carry out all necessary operations for the Section, acting in accord with Section Bylaws.

The officers shall make decisions either at the annual Section Council Meeting by a majority vote of officers in attendance; or, in the period between annual meetings, by any method (e.g., mail, e-mail, conference phone call) that allows all officers a chance to vote, provided that a quorum of at least seven officers participates in the vote.

Questions that are interpreted by the officers to be matters of new program development or policy shall be brought before the Section membership, at the time of the annual Business Meeting, for discussion. The officers may decide by majority vote to bring these and other Section issues to a vote of the Section members in attendance at the Business Meeting.

The Chair will determine the program of the Theory Section for the American Sociological Association meeting that is held during the year in which their term as Chair expires. In setting this program, they may seek the advice of an *ad hoc* Section Program Committee, which they may choose to appoint.

The Secretary-Treasurer will maintain minutes of annual Council and Business Meetings of the Section and will also maintain an updated version of the Section Bylaws, depositing copies of all such documents with the Executive Office of the American Sociological Association.

Any decision of the Section officers shall be brought to the next Business Meeting for ratification if requested by at least three officers. Any action of the Section or its officers, including changes of the Bylaws, may also be raised for reconsideration by means of a written petition of 10 percent of the members of the Section or by twenty-five members of the Section, whichever is less. Each such

petition will then be brought to discussion and, where necessary, to a vote at the next scheduled section Business Meeting. Motions receiving majority support at the Business Meeting will be adopted, except in the case of motions requiring changes in Bylaws. Proposed Bylaw modifications remain subject to the procedure for changing Bylaws stipulated in the following paragraph.

VI. Amendment of Bylaws

The power to change Section Bylaws belongs to the full membership of the Section. Changes in Bylaws require a majority vote of members voting in a ballot by Section members. Changes approved in Bylaws become effective the September 1 that directly follows their adoption by the Section membership.

VII. Elections and Voting

The positions of Chair-Elect, Secretary-Treasurer, and Section Council Member will be filled by a vote of the full Section membership. An election to fill positions that will be vacant after September 1 will be held annually and shall be carried out in cooperation with the American Sociological Association and coordinated to its schedule.

The annual ballot for the election of new members to the Section Council will take the form of an unpaired listing of four candidates, from which Section members may vote for two. The two candidates receiving the highest overall vote totals will be elected to Section Council.

VIII. Newsletter

In conformity with ASA guidelines, the Section shall sponsor a Newsletter and host a section website. Oversight of the Newsletter and Website shall be the responsibility of a Newsletter Advisory Board, which shall consist of three members: the Section Chair, the Past Chair, and one Section Council Member, designated by the Chair to serve a renewable one-year term as Head of the Advisory Board.

The Newsletter Editor shall be appointed for a three-year term. In addition, the same Advisory Board will appoint a website editor for a three-year term. The Newsletter Editor and website editor will each receive a small annual stipend, to be decided by the Chair in consultation with the Secretary/Treasurer based on budget availability. If there is more than one editor sharing the job, the stipend will be split equally among the team.

When a vacancy in either Editor position is anticipated, the Advisory Board will appoint a new Editor, after seeking applications by persons interested in filling the Editor position. The Advisory Board shall publicize the search for applicants substantially in advance of the selection of a new Editor. The Newsletter and Website Editors are jointly responsible for publishing information likely to be of interest to section members, including material relating to the business of the section, to meeting programs, to section awards, etc. The Editor is encouraged to solicit contributions that further the goals of the section.

No elected Section officer shall serve concurrently as Newsletter Editor.

IX. Committees

The Section shall have six standing committees. Other committees shall be appointed on an *ad hoc* basis by the Chair with the approval of other officers, or by a majority vote of the officers. Members of all committees will be members of the Theory Section.

Membership on all standing committees will be for a one-year term that begins September 1.

No Section member may serve concurrently on more than one standing committee. No standing committee shall have more than one Section officer among its members in any one year. No more than one committee member may serve two consecutive terms on the same standing committee.

The six standing committees shall be as follows:

1. Committee on Nominations. This will be a committee of five members, four of whom will be elected each year at the Section Business Meeting. A list of candidates for this committee will be developed at the Council Meeting by Section officers and then offered to the Business Meeting. This list may be supplemented at the Business Meeting before it votes on members for the Committee on Nominations. The fifth member of the Committee on Nominations will be the officer who becomes Past Chair following the ASA meeting.

The officer who becomes Section Chair on September 1 following the ASA meeting (i.e., the Chair-Elect at the time of the meeting) shall designate one of the four elected members of the Committee on Nominations as Committee Chair.

The task of the Committee is to propose, in advance of the Section elections, two candidates for each officer position that will vacant on the September 1 after the following's year's ASA annual meeting.

2. Theory Prize Committee. This will be a committee of five members. Two members will be elected each year at the Section Business Meeting. Three members, including the Committee Chair, will be appointed by the officer who becomes Section Chair on the September 1 following the ASA meeting (the Chair-Elect) after soliciting nominations during the business meeting and through an online survey to the full section membership, shortly after the annual meeting.

The task of the Theory Prize Committee is to evaluate submissions for, and where appropriate to award, an annual prize. The purpose of this prize is to recognize outstanding work in theory, to communicate the principle that theory is plural and broadly defined, and to promote the interest of the Theory Section.

This prize is to be awarded only to exceptional work. At its discretion, the Theory Prize Committee may also award Honorable Mentions.

In any two year period, the Theory Prize will be given for a book in the even-numbered calendar year, and for an article, chapter, or published or publicly-presented paper in the odd-numbered calendar year. Each year, only titles from the four years prior to the award year are eligible for the Theory Prize.

The Chair of the Theory Prize Committee shall have the responsibility of announcing the prize competition (in the Section Newsletter and in ASA Footnotes) and taking other appropriate measures to generate a list of nominees for the prize. The Chair shall be given latitude in determining procedures for selection of the prize winner.

The Theory Prize Award will be commissioned by the Committee Chair, in consultation with the

Section Chair, and charged to Section funds.

3. Junior Theorist Award Committee. This will be a committee of four members, who will be appointed, at or near the time of the ASA meeting, by the officer who becomes Section Chair on September 1 (the Chair-Elect). One member of the Committee will be the award winner from the previous year. Nominations for the other three members will be solicited at the Section Business Meeting and through an online survey to the full section membership, shortly after the annual meeting, for the Chair-Elect's consideration. In addition to appointing the committee, the Chair-Elect will designate one member of this Committee as Committee Chair.

The task of the Committee is to evaluate submissions for, and where appropriate to award, an annual prize. The purpose of the prize is to recognize outstanding theoretical work by an early-career sociologist (who has received the Ph.D., but who, at the time of nomination, is not more than eight years beyond the calendar year in which the Ph.D. was granted). At its discretion, the Committee may also award Honorable Mentions.

This work may take the form of: (a) a paper published or accepted for publication; (b) a paper presented at a professional meeting; or (c) a paper suitable for publication or presentation at a professional meeting. All submissions should be written or published in the 12 months preceding the nominations deadline.

The Chair of the Junior Theorist Award Committee shall have the responsibility of announcing the prize competition (in the Section Newsletter and in ASA Footnotes). Only self-nominations will be accepted; and all submissions should be accompanied by a letter explaining how the paper advances sociological theory. The Chair shall be given latitude in determining procedures for selection of the prize winner. In a year in which the Committee deems no nominated work suitable for the prize, this award may be withheld.

The Junior Theorist Award may not be granted to the recipient of the section's Theory Prize (i.e., it may not be granted to the same author, in the same year, for the same work). In the event that both committees select the same work for recognition, this work shall be awarded the Theory Prize. Should this occur, the Junior Paper Award Committee shall consider whether a runner-up is of sufficient quality to receive the Junior Theorist Award. The Committee Chair is responsible for conferring with the Chair of the Theory Prize Committee to ensure that no duplication occurs.

In addition, papers which were awarded the Graduate Student Prize for the best graduate student paper cannot be resubmitted for consideration under the Junior Theorist Award.

The Junior Theorist Award will be commissioned by the Committee Chair, in consultation with the Section Chair, and charged to Section funds.

4. Graduate Student Prize Committee. This will be a committee of five members, who will be appointed, at or near the time of the ASA meeting, by the officer who becomes Section Chair on September 1 following the annual meeting (the Chair-Elect), after soliciting nominations during the business meeting and through an online survey to the full section membership, shortly after the annual meeting.

The task of the Committee is to evaluate submissions for, and where appropriate to award, an

annual prize. The purpose of the prize is to recognize distinguished work in the theory area by a graduate student.

This work may take the form of either: (a) a paper published or accepted for publication; (b) a paper presented at a professional meeting; or (c) a paper suitable for publication or presentation at a professional meeting.

The Chair of the Graduate Student Prize Committee shall have the responsibility of announcing the prize competition (in the Section Newsletter and in ASA Footnotes) and taking other appropriate measures to generate a list of nominees for the prize. The Chair shall be given latitude in determining procedures for selection of the prize winner. In a year when the Committee deems no nominated work suitable for the prize, this award may be withheld.

The graduate student prize will take the form of an award of \$500 and a plaque.

5. Membership Committee. This will be a committee of three members, who will be appointed, at or near the time of the ASA meeting, by the officer who becomes Section Chair following the annual meeting (the Chair-Elect). The Chair-Elect will designate one member of this committee as Committee Chair.

The task of this Committee is to develop and execute measures to maintain and promote membership in the Theory Section.

6. The Coser Award Committee. The Coser Award recognizes a mid-career sociologist whose work, in the opinion of the committee, holds great promise for setting the agenda in the field of sociology. While the award winner need not be a theorist, their work must exemplify the sociological ideals Coser represented. The Coser award-winner must be within 20 years of receiving their PhD. In evaluating whether work strives for these ideals, the committee will consider Coser's commitment to: maintaining the centrality of sociological theory to sociology; avoiding the fragmentation of the field into overly narrow subfields; maintaining the critical edge of the discipline; separating political commitments from academic pursuits; and insuring the continued predominance of substance over method in the development of sociology.

To be considered for the award, candidates must be nominated by one or more people who are familiar with their work. Nomination letters should make a strong substantive case for the nominee's selection and should discuss the nominee's past work and their anticipated future trajectory. People nominated in the past are eligible to receive the award until they are more than 20 years past their PhD. Eligible nominees are passed along to subsequent committee members. Committee members may nominate candidates if they choose to do so. No self-nominations are allowed. After nomination, the committee will solicit additional information from nominees and others for those candidates they consider appropriate for consideration. Specifically, they will compile a dossier of the candidate's published works and at least two additional letters of support from third parties. The committee will make its selection based on this information and their own research into the candidates' experience and promise. The committee may decide, in any given year, that no nominee warrants the award, in which case no award will be awarded.

The committee is made up of the following members:

- The Chair of the Theory Section of the ASA, or their designate;

- One member, appointed by the Chair of the Theory Section of the ASA;
- The President of the ASA, or their designate
- One member, appointed by the president of the ASA; and
- The President of the SSSP, or their designate.