

## Alumni Spotlight

**Jeff Broxmeyer** is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Toledo. He completed his Ph.D. in Political Science at the GC in 2014.



By **Matthew Coogan**

**Matt:** Please describe the nature, themes and findings of your research at the GC.

**Jeff:** I wrote my dissertation on the birth of political capitalism the United States. Gilded Age party leaders in New York were among the earliest millionaires in the United States. Of course, republics and the wealthy go together. What distinguished these figures were that their fortunes originated from within the party system. When I started the project, I was surprised to find very little written on the subject. What initially drew me to the question was how politicians today from modest backgrounds have been able to accumulate substantial personal wealth after entering office. I wanted the dissertation to show the phenomenon had precedent.

**M:** What research projects are you currently working on? What types of courses are you teaching?

**J:** My recent work looks at how nineteenth-century politicians built governing coalitions around financial speculation. I have an article in the January issue of the *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* that shows Tammany Hall once controlled a vibrant financial sector run directly by political hacks. Also, I'm trying to push out a book manuscript that revises my dissertation and expands the story with research that takes a fresh look at the old spoils system. In terms of teaching, I am tremendously lucky to be in a department that values American political development (APD). I often teach American politics—Intro, Parties, Congress—from an APD perspective.

**M:** What was the job market like for you? Did you secure your position while still working on your dissertation? Did you consider non-academic jobs?

**J:** The academic job market is a beast. Or, at least it was for me. I was on the market for almost two years and applied to everything from tenure track to postdocs, and lecturer positions to adjunct gigs. The APSA meat market was killer, but in retrospect, good practice. There can be dead silence for months, including after interviews. I had one skype session with an exciting school and thought it went well. Later, they sent me the same rejection email forty times in three days. I suppose it was a software glitch. You have to take it in stride. What got me through dark times? Friends. Family. Luck. I tried to postpone defending until I had something in hand. When I did, it was easy to finish the dissertation writing quickly.

**M:** What advice do you have for current students about to enter the job market?

**J:** Hiring committees are black boxes. Decisions are subject to both formal and informal constraints of the institution and the particular dynamics of colleagues. One universal, however, is that committee members are busy. They try to shrink the pile of applicants. GC students will have valuable teaching experience—essential for R2s and LACs. I wouldn't recommend hitting the job market without a few publications under your belt. An article can serve as your writing sample and it is likely to stand out more than a dissertation chapter. Keep in mind the peer review process is painfully slow at some journals, which means you need to start early. Finally: don't go it alone! Reach out to fellow students and support each other by attending mock job talks, co-editing materials, and sharing tips. Be there for the collective drudgery and celebrate the victories.

