Lennie Feldman is an Associate Professor of Political Science at Hunter College and joined the faculty at the Graduate Center in the fall of 2015. He is the author of *Citizens Without Shelter: Homelessness, Democracy, and Political Exclusion* (2004) and serves as the Associate Editor of the journal, *Polity*.

By Adam Bell

Adam: Lennie, your recent work focuses on the construction of a “legal grey hole,” a concept originally put forth by David Dyzenhaus, in regard to the use of force by police. Can you please expound upon how you see it functioning?

Lennie: I’m arguing that one of the core elements of this legal grey hole in the realm of policing is the doctrine of “Qualified Immunity” which has been greatly expanded in the last 15 years to provide protection of police officers from civil rights civil litigation. Basically the Supreme Court has gradually built a legal logic that requires that a case present almost factually identical circumstances to a past case in order for it to proceed. Otherwise modest differences in facts mean that the law was ‘not clear’ at the time the police officer acted, and the officer is thus granted immunity from civil litigation.

A: What advice do you have, in terms of course of study or methodological approach, for students interested in the intersection of law and politics?

L: From where I’m situated, the first path is fairly traditional—through legal doctrine: As a political theorist it’s natural for someone like me to go to other texts as potent sites of political meaning, and judicial opinions are obviously extremely important. I think political theorists can bring something important to the study of legal texts because we are attentive to the circulation of political meanings and as (partial) outsiders to law we bring fresh eyes to legal logics. But there is also a wider tradition of empirical research into “law in action” and “law in everyday life.” The law and society approach can involve interviewing legal actors (understood broadly to include both official legal actors and private persons who mobilize law or are within its grasp), doing fieldwork in legal spaces, and exploring how law gets represented and imagined in other social locations and media. And that’s only one portion of scholarship at the intersection of law and politics, the part that links up most directly to my work in political theory. From the starting point of American Politics, law and courts are studied historically, through APD approaches, and with a focus on contemporary decision-makers, through the study of judicial behavior. So for students interested in the intersection of law and politics there are a lot of ways in!

A: What new projects are you working on?

L: I have just taken up the role of faculty head of the Human Rights program at Hunter College where I work with the program director and an interdisciplinary faculty committee to continue to develop a thriving undergraduate program and further the project of human rights. And as of this past summer, I’m serving as associate editor of the journal *Polity* along with my colleague Roger Karapin who is editor-in-chief. Both of these are great experiences and I’m learning a lot in the process.