

**Afsoun Afsahi, PhD**

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**RESEARCH INTERESTS**

*Democratic theory; deliberative democracy; multiculturalism; gender; race; disability; historical (in)justice; facilitation; quantitative methodology; experimental methodology*

My research agenda explores the challenges, opportunities, and best methods of inclusion and representation of marginalized communities in democratic decision-making processes. In my book project, I examine whether people are willing and capable of engaging in deliberations with those with whom they disagree on issues that touch upon their cultural and religious identities. In particular, I devised and, through experiments, tested the efficacy of two facilitation methods in increasing the capacity of participants to participate in a respectful, reflective, and constructive way. While I found some evidence of unwillingness for participation in deliberations that can challenge the cultural and religious identities of participants, the facilitative methods were both highly successful at increasing discourse quality by limiting the instances of engagement in undesired behaviours. Currently, I am expanding this research to consider the likelihood and longevity of opinion change as a result of deliberation when different facilitative methods are used.

**CURRENT POSITION**

Assistant Professor, Political Theory and Gender (Tenured)  
Department of Political Science, University of Amsterdam (September 2018—)  
*Affiliations:* Challenges to Democratic Representation  
Amsterdam Research Centre for Gender and Sexuality

**PREVIOUS POSITION**

Postdoctoral Fellow, The Center for Advanced Studies Justitia Amplificata  
Goethe Universität and Freie Universität Berlin (October 2017 - August 2018)  
*Research:* “Can we talk about diversity? Examining willingness and facilitating deliberative capital”  
“Who constitutes legitimate demos? Settlers, migrants, and the Indigenous populations”

**EDUCATION**

The University of British Columbia (2017)  
Ph.D., Political Science

*Dissertation:* “Can we talk? Examining Willingness and Facilitating Deliberative Capital”

<https://open.library.ubc.ca/cIRcle/collections/ubctheses/24/items/1.0339817>

*Supervising Committee:* Prof. Barbara Arneil, Prof. Mark Warren, and Prof. Fred Cutler

*Examination Committee:* Prof. Monique Deveaux, Prof. Lenora Angeles, and Prof. Bruce Baum

*Examination Fields:* Political theory, Canadian politics

The University of British Columbia (2009)  
M.A., Political Science

*Thesis:* “Freedom to Prioritize: A solution to the conflicts of Identity?”

[https://circle.ubc.ca/bitstream/id/30471/ubc\\_2009\\_fall\\_afsahi\\_afsoun.pdf](https://circle.ubc.ca/bitstream/id/30471/ubc_2009_fall_afsahi_afsoun.pdf)

*Supervisor:* Prof. Barbara Arneil

*Examiner:* Prof. Samuel LaSelva

University of Toronto (2008)

B.A. Honours (With Distinction), Political Science

*Thesis:* “Discursive Legitimacy”

*Supervisor:* Prof. Simone Chambers

*Examiner:* Prof. Lawrence LeDuc

## **MAJOR AWARDS & GRANTS**

### **Research Funding**

- 2020-2022 University of Amsterdam – Amsterdam Center for European Studies Grant (€8525)  
*Title:* “Replication study”
- 2017-2018 Justitia Amplificata (German Research Foundation-DFG) Postdoctoral Fellowship (€30,100)  
*Title:* “Who constitutes a legitimate demos? Settlers, migrants, and the Indigenous populations”
- 2013-2016 The University of British Columbia – Faculty of Arts Research Award (\$10,000)  
*Title:* “Can we talk? Examining willingness and facilitating deliberative capital”
- 2011-2013 Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada – Doctoral Grant (\$40,000)  
*Title:* “Can we talk? An examination of the capacity for deliberation”
- 2011-2013 The University of British Columbia – Four Year Fellowship Award (\$6,500)  
*Title:* “Can we talk? An examination of the capacity for deliberation”
- 2009-2013 The University of British Columbia – Faculty of Arts Graduate Award (\$80,000)  
*Title:* “Can we talk? Examining and facilitating deliberative capital”

### **Awards**

- 2007-2008 University of Toronto – New College Council Scholarship (\$150)
- 2007-2008 University of Toronto – The Rex A. Lucas Memorial Scholarship in Social Sciences (\$860)
- 2006-2008 Ontario Student Opportunity Grant (\$2100)

### **Travel Grants**

- 2014-2017 The University of British Columbia, Department of Political Science Travel Grant (\$8,000)
- 2016 The University of British Columbia, Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies (\$500)
- 2015-2017 Canadian Political Science Association Grant (\$1,000)
- 2015 American Political Science Association Grant (\$350)

## **PUBLICATIONS (\*refereed)**

\*Afsahi, Afsoun. (Forthcoming). “The role of self-interest in deliberation: a theory of deliberative capital.”  
*Political Studies.*

\* Afsahi, Afsoun. (2020). “Towards a principle of most-deeply affected.” *Philosophy and Social Criticism.*  
Online First. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0191453720972740>

- \*Afsahi, Afsoun (2020) “Disabled lives in deliberative systems.” *Political Theory* Vol. 48(6): 751-776  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0090591720913093>
- Afsahi, Afsoun. (2020). “Democracy in a Global Emergency: Five Lessons from the COVID-19 Pandemic.” *Democratic Theory*. Online First. <https://doi.org/10.3167/dt.2020.070201> With: *Emily Beausoleil, Rikki Dean, Selen Ercan, and Jean-Paul Gagnon.* (Editorial Introduction to Special Issue)
- \*Afsahi, Afsoun (2020) “Gender difference in willingness and capacity for deliberation.” *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society*. Online First. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxaa003>
- \*Afsahi, Afsoun (2020). “Deliberating across difference - religious accommodation and deliberative democracy.” *Journal of Law, Religion, and State*. Online First. <https://doi.org/10.1163/22124810-2020004>
- \*Afsahi, Afsoun (2019). “Kantian democracy: interdependence, legitimacy, and progress.” *Telos* 188. Fall 2019: 173-198. <https://doi.org/10.3817/0919188173>

### Journal Issues Edited

Guest Editor, *Democratic Theory*, 2020. Special Issue on “Democracy in the Time of COVID-19”. Vol. 7, Iss. 2. With: *Emily Beausoleil, Rikki Dean, Selen Ercan, and Jean-Paul Gagnon.*

### Manuscripts submitted for publication

Afsahi, Afsoun. “When facilitation is not enough: the role of games in deliberation.” *Under Review.*

Afsahi, Afsoun. “Enclave Deliberations in the Public: a typology of enclaves in the digital age”. *Under Review.*

### Manuscripts in progress

Afsahi, Afsoun. “Can we talk? willingness, deliberative capital, and trust in diverse communities” (In progress) – *Book manuscript*

Afsahi, Afsoun. “Deliberative campaigns”. (In progress) – *Journal article*

Afsahi, Afsoun. “Data-sensitive political theory”. (In progress) – *Journal article*

Afsahi, Afsoun. “Realist theory of deliberative democracy”. With Ilaria Cozzaglio. (In progress) – *Journal article*

Afsahi, Afsoun. “Resurgence of les chansons engagées in Québec in 2000s: The case of Les Cowboys Fringants”. (In progress) – *Journal article*

### SELECTED INVITED PRESENTATIONS

“Experiments in deliberative democracy: facilitation and increasing discourse quality”. Presented at the Workshop on Data-sensitive political theory”. Reading, UK. (February 2020)

“Grounded Normative Theory and its Methodologies” [Roundtable]. Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association. Vancouver, Canada. (June 2019)

“Disabled lives in Deliberative Systems”. Presented at the Workshop on Inclusion and Discursive Participation. Frankfurt, Germany. (February 2019)

“Deliberative capital”. Presented at the Political Theory Colloquium. Frankfurt, Germany. (June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018)

“Deliberative Democracy and the use of Animals in Research”. Presented at the Canadian Association for

Laboratory Animal Science. Vancouver, Canada. (June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2012)

### **SELECTED CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS**

- “Disabled lives in Deliberative Systems”. Presented at the European Consortium for Political Research. Wroclaw, Poland. (September 2019).
- “Enclave deliberations in the public – double-speak and dog whistles in a digital age”. Presented at the European Consortium for Political Research. Wroclaw, Poland. (September 2019).
- “Gender difference in willingness and capacity for deliberation”. Presented at the Annual Meeting of the European Conference on Politics and Gender. Amsterdam, the Netherlands. (July 2019).
- “Enclave deliberations in the public – double-speak and dog whistles in a digital age”. Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association. Vancouver, Canada. (June 2019).
- “Who constitutes a legitimate demos? Settlers, migrants, and Indigenous peoples”. Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association. Vancouver, Canada. (June 2019).
- Enclave deliberations in the public – double-speak and dog whistles in a digital age. Presented at the Annual Philosophy and Social Science Conference. Prague, Czech Republic. (May 2019).
- “What’s wrong with the public sphere? Willingness, participation, and the all-affected principle”. Presented at *Demarcating the Demos*, the Annual Conference, Center for Advanced Studies Justitia Amplificata, Forschungskolleg Humanwissenschaften, Bad Homburg, Germany. (July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2018).
- “Can deliberation strengthen multiculturalism? The case of religious arbitration in Canada”. Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association. Regina, Canada. (May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018).
- “Can deliberation strengthen multiculturalism? The case of religious arbitration in Canada”. Presented at the Justitia Amplificata Political Theory (works in progress) workshop. Bad Homburg, Germany. (February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2018).
- “Gender difference in deliberative orientation”. Presented at the Fellows Colloquium, Forschungskolleg Humanwissenschaften. Bad Homburg, Germany. (January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018).
- “Increasing discourse quality: deliberative capital and facilitation” Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association. Toronto, Canada. (May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2017).
- “Do men and women differ in their deliberative orientation?” Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association. Toronto, Canada. (June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017).
- “Talking across diversity: deliberative capital & facilitating discourse quality” Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association. Philadelphia, USA. (September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2016).
- “Do we want to talk? Willingness for deliberation” Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association. Calgary, Canada. (May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2016).
- “Deliberation under conditions of deep diversity” Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association. San Francisco, USA. (September 5<sup>th</sup>, 2015).
- “Deliberation under conditions of deep diversity” Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Political Science Association. Ottawa, Canada. (June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015).
- “Barriers to multicultural deliberation” Presented at the Association for Political Theory. Madison, USA. (October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2014).

**RESEARCH EXPERIENCE****Research supervision**

MSc Supervisor (11 students), University of Amsterdam. (February – June 2020)

MSc Supervisor (12 students), University of Amsterdam. (February – June 2019)

**Research training**

Advanced Quantitative Methods in Political Science, University of British Columbia. (Summer 2014)

Introduction to Stata, Princeton University, Online modules. (Winter 2011)

Statistical analysis, UCLA Institute for Digital Research and Education. Online modules. (Winter 2011)

Quantitative Techniques in Political Analysis, University of British Columbia. (Winter 2010)

Interpretation and Criticism in Political Inquiry, University of British Columbia. (Winter 2010)

Research Methods in Political Science, University of Toronto. (Winter 2007)

**TEACHING EXPERIENCE****Instructor**

Politics of Gender and Diversity in Theory and Practice, MSc, University of Amsterdam

Winter 2020

Winter 2019

Winter 2018

Feminist theories, BSc, University of Amsterdam

Winter 2020

Winter 2019

Winter 2018

Democracy in question: diversity, marginalization, and responsibility (Research Supervisor) – MSc, University of Amsterdam.

Spring 2020 (Supervised 11 students)

Spring 2019 (Supervised 12 students)

Core Module Political Theory, BSc, University of Amsterdam.

Spring 2020

Spring 2019

Introduction to Politics, [BA, POLI100], University of British Columbia.

Spring 2017

Summer 2014

**Teaching Assistant**

Currents of Political Thought, [BA, POLI240], University of British Columbia. (Spring 2009, 2016; Winter 2013, 2015, 2016)

Political Philosophy and the Politics of Fear, [BA, POLI342], University of British Columbia. (Spring 2011, 2014, 2015)

Introduction to Politics, [BA, POLI100], University of British Columbia. (Winter 2008, 2009; Spring 2013)

Democratic Theory, [BA, POLI346], University of British Columbia. (Winter 2012)

History of Political Ideas, [BA, POLI340], University of British Columbia. (Winter 2011; Spring 2012)

Government and Politics of the United States, [BA, POLI320], University of British Columbia. (Spring 2010)

### **Invited lectures and seminars**

“Inclusive democracy and democratic innovations”. *Diversity, Equality, and Justice*. University of Amsterdam. Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences. (March 2020)

“Democracy under scrutiny”. *Democratic Dys[U]topias*. University of Amsterdam. Graduate School of Social Sciences. (April 2019)

### **Teaching training**

“Introduction to Early Alert”, The University of British Columbia Student Services. (April 2013)\*

\* Early alert is a program at the University of British Columbia geared towards supporting student learning and success by helping faculty, staff, and teaching assistants provide better support for students who are facing difficulties that put their academic success at risk. This training session introduced participants to the main warning signals that demonstrate student distress and downward spiral. Furthermore, it outlined the various response scenarios appropriate for different issues.

“Dealing with diversity in the classroom. The University of British Columbia TA training program. (September 2009)

“Dealing with disruptive students”. The University of British Columbia TA training program. (October 2008)

“Introductory training”. The University of British Columbia TA training program. (September 2008)

### **SERVICE**

#### **Editor**

Book Review Editor, *Democratic Theory* (March 2020 – Present)

#### **Reviewer**

European Journal of Political Theory

European Journal of Political Research

Political Studies

Krisis

Theoria

European Journal of Politics and Gender

Bloomsbury

#### **Leader/ member**

*Board Member*, Amsterdam Research Centre for Gender and Sexuality. (September 2018 — Present)

*Member*, Challenges to Democratic Representation. (September 2018 — Present)

*Member*, Amsterdam Centre for Conflict Studies (July 2019 — Present)

*Member*, Amsterdam Center for European Studies. (May 2020 — Present)

*Junior Leader/Coordinator*, Amsterdam Centre for European Studies, Diverse Europe Theme Group. (May 2019 — May 2020)

### Conference organization

Co-Section Head, *Political Theory*, Canadian Political Science Association Annual Conference, Alberta, Canada. (June 2021). *With* Genevieve Fuji Johnson.

Co-organizer of *Public Ethics: Recent work in experimental political philosophy*, Panel, International Political Science Association, Lisbon, Portugal. (July 2020, *Cancelled for public health reasons*). *With*: Andrei Poama.

Co-organizer of *Demarcating the Demos*, Annual Conference, Center for Advanced Studies Justitia Amplificata, Forschungskolleg Humanwissenschaften, Bad Homburg, Germany. (July 2018).

Invited speakers included: Guy Aitchison (University College Dublin), Emily Beausoleil (Massey University), Anna Jurkevics (University of British Columbia), Melissa Schwartzberg (New York University), Anna Stilz (Princeton), and Melissa Williams (University of Toronto).

Co-convener of the *Speaker series "Bringing the Collective Together: Nonhuman animals, Humans, and Practice at the University"*, Green College, The University of British Columbia. (September 2011 – April 2012)

I was a co-convener of an academic speaker series on the topic of the use of animals in research at the university. In my role, I reached out to and was able to bring together scientists, ethicists, social scientists, activists, and member of the community. This diverse group of individuals, then, had the chance to critically discuss the governance of nonhuman animals and their use at the University during a six-month process.

### Discussant

Canadian Political Science Association, Vancouver, BC (June 2019)

Papers: "Hobbes and the tragedy of democracy" (Christopher Holman)

"Democratic theory and the circumstances of international politics" (Zhichao Tong)

"The utopian contours of insurgent democracy: simulacrum and the community of readers in Abensour" (Paul Mazzocchi)

The Amsterdam Graduate Conference in Political Theory, Amsterdam (May 2019)

Papers: "What do experiences of injustice tell us about justice?" (Ane Engelstad).

"Towards Indigenous peoples political theory: an account of *Adivai* land struggle and the limits of constitutionality in postcolonial India" (Rahul Ranjan)

A Kantian International Order—Principles and Institutions, Frankfurt (July 2018)

Paper: "Kant's Choice for Federation and Hospitality over Universal Monarchy and the Law of Nations" (Christopher Meckstroth).

Canadian Political Science Association, Regina, SK (May 2018).

Papers: "Demagoguery and Democracy: Anti-Intellectualism in the Rise of the Masses" (Hailey Murphy).

"Deliberative Democracy's Epistemic Gap Problem" (Darielle Talarico).

"Measuring the Inclusiveness of Deliberation: An Addition to the Discourse Quality Index (Patricia Mockler).

Political Theory Workshop, The University of British Columbia. (February 2014)

Paper: "Canada, Human-Animal relations, and University Practices" (Laura Janara).

Political Science Graduate Conference, The University of British Columbia. (January 2012)

Papers: “Emancipatory imperialism: Citizenship, Nationality, Subjecthood in the British Empire” (Richard Togman).

“The good, the bad, and the ugly: the promises and perils of linking social and cognitive science in the study of political behaviour” (David Moscrop).

Scientific Authority in Democratic Societies workshop, Peter Wall Center, UBC. (June 2011)

Papers: “Sharing Authority for expert decisions: The relevance of the jury” (Albert Dzur).

“Full circle: The emphasis on trustworthy expertise in public deliberations on biotechnology” (Michael Burgess).

## **PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

Consultant on a series of mini-publics for *Toronto Hydro*, Innovative Research Group. (June 2017)

I served as the consultant during the research and development phase of a series of deliberative mini-publics on electricity utilities. The aim of the mini-publics would be to recruit customers, and provide feedback on key planning questions facing electricity utilities. The core debate was over the right balance between affordability and reliability but it also concerned customer services issues as well as the design of customer tools. My job was to provide expert knowledge on deliberative democratic practices. I put together and presented a report on a number of key issues: what makes good and bad deliberative process; what factors are key in determining recruitment; what kind of information needs to be provided and how; what considerations should be kept in mind in formatting the process; what lessons we can learn from both successful and unsuccessful deliberative process; and what are the best methods of facilitation of such conversations.

Facilitator for the *Citizens’ Assembly on the Grandview-Woodland Community Plan*, MASS LBP. (August 2014 – May 2015)

I served as a facilitator for the Grandview-Woodlands Citizens’ Assembly—a nine-month deliberative process commissioned by Vancouver City Council. 48 community members were tasked with drafting recommendations on development and land-use, which were to inform the city’s Community Plan for the neighborhood. As a facilitator, I moderated the assembly members’ deliberations and their discussions with community members at public round tables. Additionally, I collaborated with the Assembly design team to streamline the deliberative process.

Scribe and second moderator for the *Forum on Best Practices for Child Protection Agency*, Parent Support Services Society of BC. (March 2011).

I served as a scribe and stand-in moderator for a deliberative engagement on child protection and advocacy. This was part of *The Child Protection Advocacy Research Project* (2008 – 2011) which sought to increase understanding of the role that advocates can and do play in child protection cases. This dialogue brought together social workers, advocates, lawyers and, of course, people in a parenting role to share their perspectives about how advocacy can be most ethical and effective. I took detailed notes about the main issues, points of agreement and disagreement, and recurring questions. Furthermore, I made suggestions to the main facilitator during short debriefing breaks. I was able to act as a moderator with the supervision of the main facilitator for portions of the discussion.

## **AFFILIATIONS**

American Political Science Association

Canadian Political Science Association



Association for Political Theory  
European Consortium for Political Research, *Democratic Innovations*, *Political Theory*  
Participedia  
Cluster of Excellence “Normative Orders”

**LANGUAGES**

English (Fluent)  
Farsi (Fluent)  
French (Intermediate)  
German (Beginner)  
Dutch (Beginner)

**SOFTWARE PROFICIENCY**

nVivo  
STATA

**REFERENCES**

**Professor Barbara Arneil**

University of British Columbia  
Email: [arneil@mail.ubc.ca](mailto:arneil@mail.ubc.ca)  
Phone: +1(604)822-6079

**Professor Mark Warren**

University of British Columbia  
Email: [mark.warren@ubc.ca](mailto:mark.warren@ubc.ca)  
Phone: +1(604)822-4355

**Professor Rainer Forst**

Goethe University Frankfurt  
Email: [forst@em.uni-frankfurt.de](mailto:forst@em.uni-frankfurt.de)  
Phone: +49(69)798-31540

**Professor Genevieve Fuji Johnson**

Simon Fraser University  
Email: [gjohnso@sfu.ca](mailto:gjohnso@sfu.ca)  
Phone: +1(778)782-3145

**Professor Fred Cutler**

University of British Columbia  
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Phone: +1(604)441-3641