Princeton University

HONORS FACULTY MEMBERS
RECEIVING EMERITUS STATUS

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The biographical sketches were written by staff and
colleagues in the departments of those honored.

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Faculty Members Honored in 2019
for Receiving Emeritus Status

MARTIN GILENS

M artin I. Gilens, professor of politics and public Affairs in the Department of Politics and the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, transferred to emeritus status in 2018 after 15 years on Princeton's faculty. He was a highly influential and rigorous scholar, effective teacher, dedicated colleague, and all-around mensch. His careful, ambitious, and accessible research on American democracy sheds light on central challenges of our time, including media bias, racism, poverty, and the outsize influence of wealth. His widely cited studies have brought to light severe problems with the American political system yet uphold the inherent capacity and goodness of ordinary people. Wise in judgment, modest of bearing, conscientious about principle, and generous of spirit, Marty will be sorely missed at Princeton by colleagues, students, and friends.

Analytical, open-minded, and altruistic from a young age, Marty spent his college years in the unusual pursuit of both sociology and philosophy. He earned a bachelor's degree with distinction in both disciplines at the University of California-Santa Cruz, in 1982. He continued his studies at the University of California-Berkeley, with a master's in 1985 and a Ph.D. in 1991. The degrees were in sociology, but he continued to reach across disciplines, to the study of politics. He was appointed assistant professor in Yale University's Department of Political Science in 1992, then promoted to associate professor. He moved to UCLA in 2000 as a tenured associate professor in political science and associate director of the Institute for Social Science Research, and then directed the Center for Research in Society and Politics there. Princeton was fortunate to recruit him as associate professor of politics in 2003. He was appointed professor of politics in 2011 and professor of public affairs in the Woodrow Wilson School in February 2018. He joined UCLA's Luskin School of Public Affairs in fall 2018 as professor of public policy.

His first major work was *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media, and the Politics of Anti-Poverty Policy* (University of Chicago Press, 1999). In this book and associated articles, Marty demonstrated that racial stereotypes grossly distort news coverage of poverty and powerfully shape Americans' hostility toward welfare. The extent of the distortion, and the role of the news media in it, were new and extremely significant findings. But the study also highlights what was a neglected

fact: the vast majority of Americans truly want to help the poor. The book won the prestigious Philip E. Converse Award from the Elections, Public Opinion, and Voting Behavior Section of the American Political Science Association for an outstanding book of enduring significance published at least five years before, and the Lane Award for the best book in the political psychology published in the past year. It is among the handful of the most-frequently taught books in graduate courses in American politics. It became a fixture in scholarly arguments about racism and poverty in the United States.

In 2012 Marty published an even more significant work, *Affluence & Influence: Economic Inequality and Political Power in America* (Princeton University Press and Russell Sage Foundation). This book stands as the most ambitious and systematic study of the influence of money in American politics. Marty compiled thousands of available survey questions about specific policies, asked over the course of several decades. He researched whether each policy was later enacted. To this he added comprehensive data he collected on lobbying groups. The findings directly challenged the influential "pluralist" school of thought. That school had long argued that in America, economic power remains sequestered in the private sphere, allowing government to serve the people. One way we know this, those scholars argue, is that the views of the public are reflected in government policy: as those views change, so does policy, even if change is often difficult, slow, or partial. Marty found instead that the public has virtually no meaningful influence over policy. The apparent responsiveness of government to the public is explained almost entirely by the influence of the affluent segment of the population, an influence amplified by the disproportionate number of business organizations lobbying in Washington. When the public's views conflict with those of affluent Americans, the public does not get its way. American government is not responsive to the people. Poor Americans have no say in government, and neither does the middle class. This stark finding is shocking, but it is not the pronouncement of a wild-eyed polemicist. It emerged from the painstaking collection and rigorous analysis of massive amounts of data, the labor of an extraordinarily careful social scientist. It calls into doubt the fundamental democratic character of the American political system.

However, as did much of his other work, *Affluence & Influence* emphasized the ability of the public to govern. The problem with democracy is not that the public is too ignorant or inattentive. Ordinary people are not incapable of holding officials accountable or instructing them in what should be done. Rather, the problem is a system that neglects or distorts public wishes.

The book was recognized with the highest distinction in political science, the American Political Science Association (APSA)'s Woodrow Wilson Award, for the best book published in the U.S. during the previous year on government, politics, or international affairs. It won many other honors, including the Best Book Award of the American Association for Public Opinion Research, for a book of lasting value that is at least three years old. It was a Choice Top 25 Book, and a Choice Outstanding Academic Title. Although it focused on the United States, its importance led to a Chinese translation. Marty distilled this research in a highly influential article in *Perspectives on Politics,* the APSA's flagship journal dedicated to political science in the public sphere (written with Benjamin Page, 2014). As of this writing, five years later, it is by far the most-read article ever published in that journal.

Marty extended this research in his next book, *Democracy in America? What Has Gone Wrong and What We Can Do about It* (University of Chicago Press, 2017, with Benjamin Page). This was an extremely ambitious undertaking, requiring a bird's-eye view of the entire complex system of formal power in America. It also required the wisdom to formulate paths out of what increasingly appears to be a swamp of dysfunction. The book argues that to live up to its democratic aspirations, the United States must undertake deep reforms. It must restructure elections, rid itself of the corrupting influence of money in politics, and alter the incentives for policymakers.

Marty's work is influential and esteemed in and out of the academy. Much of his research has been published in the most selective outlets in political science. His citation count is the highest of the 16 current members of the American politics faculty in Princeton's politics department. More importantly, his contributions are widely recognized outside of political science. He was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and invited to deliver prestigious keynotes for other disciplines (such as the Storrs Lecture at Yale Law School). His work has been supported by nearly all of the most selective social science grants and fellowships available to scholars of American politics, including the National Science Foundation, Russell Sage Foundation, Social Science Research Council, the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford, and the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton. His research has garnered attention from leading news outlets around the globe and across the political spectrum. Indeed, he was interviewed by both MSNBC and Fox News. The most exciting of his interviews was with *The Daily Show.* In the immortal words of host and comedian Jon Stewart, "the people love a quantitative analysis."

Marty also has provided outstanding service to the department. His is the kind of everyday dedication without which an organization cannot exist but which calls no attention to itself. Even in a large department, and where the incentives reward publishing more-better-faster, Marty has always attended meetings, replied to email on time and in full sentences, and read everything he was asked. He does all this with care and diligence. To put it simply, he is fully present. There are rarely prizes for this kind of quiet yet essential self-sacrifice. But when they exist, Marty earns them. When the APSA section on Class and Inequality established an outstanding member award, Marty was its first recipient.

Marty has taught students not only to tackle problems that matter, but also how to do it rigorously. He teaches students of all levels how to conduct systematic, valid social science. He puts in the time to read drafts and suggest the best way to improve the research. Somehow, he is also always kind. Marty's signature style is constructive criticism. Student acknowledgements highlight his encouragement no less than his judicious guidance. As one student wrote, "his door was always open, his smile often contagious."

We will miss that cheerful disposition, and the regard for others that motivates it. But along with the world of public affairs, and the community of social scientists, we will continue to benefit from Marty's exceptional insight and dedication.