

Princeton University
Honors Faculty Members Receiving
Emeritus Status



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

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Nancy Bermeo



In the 25 years that Nancy Bermeo has been at Princeton, she has made a profound and enduring impact on the University and the profession at large. She has been an exemplary scholar, colleague, mentor, and friend.

Nancy received her undergraduate degree from Mount Holyoke College and her Ph.D. from Yale University (both in political science). After a brief stint as an assistant professor at Dartmouth College, she came to Princeton as a visiting assistant professor in 1982 and subsequently joined the Princeton politics faculty the following year.

Committed to substantively important questions and rich theoretical debate, Nancy has been a leading scholar of regime change, labor, civil society, learning, and institutional design. She has published two outstanding single-authored books, six co-edited volumes, and numerous articles that have shaped social science debate. She is also the recipient of prestigious grants and fellowships from the Fulbright Association, the Social Science Research Council, the German Marshall Fund, the Carnegie Endowment, the C.N.R.S. in France, the Luso American Development Foundation in Portugal, and the Center of Advanced Study in Madrid.

As a whole, her writings demonstrate an exemplary ability to identify cutting-edge questions that advance both our theoretical, political, and normative understanding of the key issues of our time—particularly revolution, democracy, regime change, labor politics, federalism, and political learning. Strikingly, her work has contributed to our understanding of these processes around the world. While she started off working on Southern Europe, her work has come also to include comparative writing about Western Europe, the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe,

and Latin America. Her recent research, in fact, has taken her to work on parts of the developing world, including Africa and Asia. As such, Nancy has emerged as a scholar of great theoretical insight and tremendous comparative reach.

Her first book, *The Revolution within the Revolution* (Princeton University Press, 1986), analyzed the emergence and taming of agrarian radicalism in the Portuguese “revolution” of the 1970s. It was a detailed study of how workers and peasants in Portugal organized workers’ collectives in southern Portugal, contributing to regime change, but then also how some of their gains were subsequently compromised under the new democratic regime. Her original fieldwork and writings refined our understanding of agrarian radicalism and greatly contributed to our understanding of the possibility of socialism within democracy. The book was applauded by leading political scientists for its empirics, theoretical precision, imagination, and lucidity.

Nancy subsequently shaped our understanding of labor and unemployment, federalism, and civil society through many co-edited volumes and articles—including *Liberalization and Democratization: Change in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe* (1992); *Unemployment in Southern Europe: Coping with the Consequences* (2000); *Civil Society before Democracy: Lessons from Nineteenth-Century Europe* (ed., with Philip Nord, 2000); *Unemployment in the New Europe* (2001); *Who Governs Southern Europe?* (ed., with Antonio Costa Pinto and Pedro de Almeida, 2003); and *Federalism and Territorial Cleavages* (ed., with Ugo Amoretti, 2004).

Her book, *Ordinary People in Extraordinary Times: The Citizenry and Collapse of Democracy* (Princeton University Press, 2003) went on to receive the 2004 Best Book Award from the American Political Science Association’s Democratization Section and was named a 2005 Outstanding Academic Title from *Choice Magazine*. This landmark comparative study of democratic breakdown in Europe and Latin America is a

sweeping 17-country study of Europe and Latin America. This book has proven decisive in destroying the prevailing idea that democracies break down mainly due to polarized mass politics. Indeed, *Ordinary People* is a devastating critique of prevailing arguments about mass polarization and regime breakdown, as Nancy demonstrates that elites (not the citizenry at large) were overwhelmingly responsible for the erosion of democracy and its ultimate overthrow. As Michael Bernhard writes, “Lucid and compelling, this book will change the way in which comparative politics conceives of the polarization of politics associated with the failure of democracy. It will be an enduring contribution.” Alfred Stepan, a leading scholar of regimes change, states: “Comparative politics needs more books like this... Her book will force a major reconceptualization of what ‘voter polarization’ means.” This book has emerged as a major book in studies of regime change.

At present, Nancy is writing a much-anticipated book addressing the prospects for democracy in countries that have experienced war—a question of central theoretical concern to the social sciences and of central political interest to the world at large. She is investigating how the experience of war affects political elites and political institutions; and second, how institutions can be structured to mitigate and manage deadly political divisions. This work has led her to conduct research and lecture all over the world.

While Nancy’s academic work and teaching have earned the respect of her colleagues and students, her dedication as a citizen has earned her the gratitude of the entire University. Nancy was an excellent interim politics department chair and outstanding director of graduate studies. In addition, she has served on the executive committee for the Program in the Study of Women and Gender, the Program in Latin American Studies, European Studies, and the James Madison Program, as well as on the interdepartmental committee for the Fund for Irish Studies. So too, she has played an active role in the

profession's American Political Science Association—serving as vice president of the democratization section of APSA in 2002–03, chairing the comparative politics section for the annual meetings in 1996–97; chairing the Western European section for the annual meetings in 1992–93, and chairing several prize committees.

Otherwise stated, Nancy has not only studied democracy but also practiced it, trying to bring the civic-mindedness of a good democrat to her scholarship and University work. Nancy's effort to promote greater gender equity has been particularly noteworthy in this regard. She has been an influential and inspiring mentor to younger women within the Department of Politics and a valued colleague to women faculty members across the campus. Nancy served for a number of years on the faculty committee of the Program in the Study of Women and Gender and was an active participant in many discussions held in recent years about the status of women faculty at Princeton.

Nancy's colleagues have highlighted her consistent and deep commitment to collaboration. In addition to the edited volumes, she has been a proactive organizer of seminars both within the Department of Politics and in collaboration with others across the University. In addition to chairing the Comparative Politics Seminar series, she also co-organized a social science and history seminar that fostered dynamic intellectual discussion across the disciplines. Moreover, she has been a longstanding senior member of leading editorial boards—including *World Politics*, *Political Science Quarterly*, *Southern European Politics and Society*, and *Journal of Democracy*. Along with her position on various executive committees across the University, Nancy has played an important role in stimulating and institutionalizing University-wide discussions and professional scholarly debate.

As a gifted and committed teacher and mentor, Nancy also was the first recipient of the Stanley Kelley Jr. Teaching Award, in 1998. Undergraduate and graduate students have consistently sung her praise, commenting on her unparalleled ability not

only to capture their intellectual imagination and provide incisive intellectual guidance, but also to serve as a role model for her outstanding scholarship, teaching, and citizenship. As director of graduate studies she played a particularly important role in guiding students through their doctorate studies and in shaping intellectual agendas. Her dedication and success as director of graduate studies set the bar higher for directors who followed her. It is therefore no surprise that Nancy has a dedicated corps of current and former students who have gone on to pursue successful careers after graduating from Princeton.

As Nancy retires and assumes emeritus status at Princeton, she leaves behind a legacy of excellent scholarship, institution building, collaboration, and mentorship. Combined with her unparalleled commitment to integrity, collaboration, and democracy, she has been a great colleague, teacher, and friend. We will deeply miss her at Princeton and wish her all the best at Oxford University, where she assumes the Nuffield Chair in Comparative Politics.