

# David Skarbek

Brown University  
Department of Political Science  
Email: David\_Skarbek@Brown.edu  
Web: www.DavidSkarbek.com

Mailing Address:  
25 George Street, Box 2005  
Providence, RI 02906

---

## Professional Appointments

### **Brown University**

Associate Professor of Political Science  
Political Theory Project

September 2017 – present

September 2017 – present

### **University of California, Berkeley**

Visiting Scholar, Center for the Study of Law & Society

September 2019 – April 2020

### **King's College London**

Senior Lecturer in Political Economy  
Lecturer in Political Economy

July 2015 – August 2017

September 2012 – June 2015

### **Duke University**

Searle Visiting Assistant Professor in Political Science

August 2010 – August 2012

---

## Education

Ph.D. in Economics, George Mason University	2010
M.A. in Economics, George Mason University	2008
B.S. in Economics, San Jose State University	2006

---

## Other Affiliations

Editorial Board Member, <i>Incarceration</i>	2020 – present
External Affiliate, Ostrom Workshop, Indiana University, Bloomington	2018 – present
Founding Member, Network for Constitutional Economics and Social Philosophy	2017 – present
Member, ECPR, Standing Group on Organized Crime	2015 – present
Member, Global Prisons Research Network	2014 – present
Associate Member, Extra-legal Governance Institute at University of Oxford	2013 – present
Editorial Board Member, <i>Global Crime</i>	2012 – present

---

## Research Grants

\$10,000	Centre for the Study of Governance & Society, King's College London (w D. Freire)	2020
€55,000	Konrad Adenauer Foundation (w U. Mignozzetti and D. Freire)	2018
£9,796	British Academy (RCUK) Small Research Grant (w J. Meadowcroft)	2016
\$16,500	Earhart Foundation (for project on Global Prisons)	2014
\$20,500	Earhart Foundation (for The Social Order of the Underworld)	2012
\$5,500	Horowitz Foundation for Social Policy Research (for Governance and Prison Gangs)	2009

## Books

---

### **The Puzzle of Prison Order: Why Life Behind Bars Varies around the World.**

Oxford University Press.

Hardcover, 2020. Paperback, 2020. E-book, 2020.

- Winner, 2021 Outstanding Book Award, Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences, International Section.

Academic Reviews: International Criminal Justice Review, Perspectives on Politics (A Critical Dialogue), Public Choice, Quarterly Journal of Austrian Economics, Review of Austrian Economics

### **The Social Order of the Underworld: How Prison Gangs Govern the American Penal System.**

Oxford University Press.

Hardcover, 2014. Paperback, 2014. E-book, 2014.

Chinese translation for the Chinese University of Political Science and Law, 2016.

Spanish translation, forthcoming

- Winner, 2016 William H. Riker Award for Best Book in Political Economy in the previous three years, American Political Science Association, Political Economy Section.
- Winner, 2014 Outstanding Publication Award, International Association for the Study of Organized Crime
- Shortlisted, 2014 Thinking Allowed Ethnography Award, British Sociological Association & the BBC.

Academic Reviews: American Journal of Sociology, British Journal of Criminology, Cato Journal, Contemporary Sociology, Criminal Justice Review, Economic Affairs, ECPR Standing Group on Organised Crime, Global Crime, Independent Review, Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law, Latin American Research Review, LSE Review of Books, Public Choice, Punishment & Society, Quarterly Journal of Austrian Economics, Theoretical Criminology

Media Reviews (selected): The Atlantic, BBC, Business Insider, The Economist, Estado de São Paulo, Forbes, The Independent, Marginal Revolution, The Times.

## Journal Articles

---

“The Evolution of Norms within a Society of Captives.” (with C. Seagren) **Journal of Economic Interaction and Coordination**. 2021.

“Institutional Design and Elite Support for Climate Policies.” (with D. Freire and U. Mignozzetti). **Journal of Experimental Political Science**. 2020.

“Qualitative Research Methods for Institutional Analysis” **Journal of Institutional Economics**. 16(4) 2020: 409-422.

- Lead article, with three comments published in response.
- Winner, SDAE Prize for the Best Article in Austrian Economics

“The Decline and Rise of Institutions” (with L. Palagashvili and E. Piano). **Cambridge University Press**. Cambridge Elements, 2017.

“Covenants without the Sword? Comparing Prison Self-Governance Globally” **American Political Science Review** 110(4) 2016: 845-862.

- “Criminal Rituals” (with P. Wang) **Global Crime** 16(4) 2015: 288-305.
- “Prison Gangs and the Community Responsibility System” (with M. Garrett Roth) **Review of Behavioral Economics** 1(3) 2014: 223-243.
- “The Effect of Prison Gang Membership on Recidivism” (with B. Dooley and A. Seals) **Journal of Criminal Justice** 42(3) 2014: 267-275.
- “Why Didn’t Slaves Revolt More Often During the Middle Passage?” (with A. Marcum) **Rationality & Society** 26(2) 2014: 232-262.
- “The Governance Institutions of a Drug Trafficking Organization” (with J. Kostelnik) **Public Choice** 156(1-2) 2013: 95-103.
- “The Industrial Organization of Street Gangs” (with R. Sobel) **Journal of Gang Research** 20(1) 2012: 1-17.
- “Anarchy, Groups, and Conflict: An Experiment on the Emergence of Protective Associations” (with A. Smith and B. Wilson) **Social Choice & Welfare** 38(2) 2012: 325-353.
- “Prison Gangs, Norms, and Organizations” **Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization** 82(1) 2012: 96-109.
- Winner, Emerald Citations of Excellence 2015
  - Winner, FEE Prize for Best Article in Austrian Economics 2013
- “Sweatshops, Opportunity Costs, and Non-Monetary Compensation: Evidence from El Salvador” (with E. Skarbek, B. Skarbek, and E. Skarbek) **American Journal of Economics & Sociology** 71(3) 2012: 539-561.
- “Governance and Prison Gangs” **American Political Science Review** 105(4) 2011: 702-716.
- Reprinted in *The Economics of Governance* (ed. Donald Wittman) Edward Elgar Publisher, 2016.
  - Reprinted in *Transnational Organized Crime* (ed. James Sheptycki) Sage Publications, 2014.
- “What Aid Can’t Do: Reply to Ranis” (with P. Leeson) **Cato Journal** 31(1) 2011: 83-86.
- “Putting the ‘Con’ into Constitutions: The Economics of Prison Gangs” **Journal of Law, Economics, & Organization** 26(2) 2010: 183-211.
- “Criminal Constitutions” (with P. Leeson) **Global Crime** 11(3) 2010: 279-298.
- “Self-Governance in San Pedro Prison” **The Independent Review** 14(4) 2010: 569-585.
- “Alertness, Local Knowledge, and Johnny Appleseed” **Review of Austrian Economics** 22(4) 2009: 415-424.
- “What Can Aid Do?” (with P. Leeson) **Cato Journal** 29(3) 2009: 391-397.

“F.A. Hayek’s Influence on Nobel Prize Winners” **Review of Austrian Economics** 22(1) March 2009: 109-112.

“Market Failure and Natural Disasters: A Reexamination of Anti-Gouging Laws” **Public Contract Law Journal** 37(4) 2008: 771-780.

“The Price is Right: Regulation, Reputation, and Recovery” (with B. Skarbek) **Dartmouth Law Journal** 6(2) 2008: 235-276.

“Occupational Licensing and Asymmetric Information: Post-Hurricane Evidence from Florida” **Cato Journal** 28(1) 2008: 71-80.

“Sweatshops Wages and Third World Living Standards: Are the Jobs Worth the Sweat?” (with B. Powell) **Journal of Labor Research** 27(2) 2006: 263-274.

## Working Papers

---

“Does It Matter Who Candidates Marry? Assessing the Electoral Consequences of Interracial Marriage” (w P. Testa and B. Davis). In preparation.

“Abolish the Police? An Economic Framework for Analysis” Under review.

“Vigilantism” (with D. Freire). In preparation.

Unbundling Policing: How to Have a Less Crime and More Justice. Manuscript in progress.

## Chapters in Books

---

“Analytical Narratives and Institutional Analysis” **Essays in Honor of Peter Boettke**, 2020.

“Prisoner’s Law” in **Legal Systems Very Different from Ours**. (with David D. Friedman and Peter Leeson) 2019.

“Prison Gangs” (with D. Freire) **Handbook of Corrections in the United States**. O. Hayden Griffin III and Vanessa Woodward (eds). Routledge. 2018.

“Self-Governance, Property Rights, and Illicit Commerce” **Research Handbook on Austrian Law & Economics**. Peter Boettke and Todd Zywicki (eds). Edward Elgar Publishing. 2017.

“Polycentrism and Prison Gangs” (with A. Marcum) **The Annual Proceedings of the Wealth and Well Being of Nations**. Upton Forum. Beloit College. 2012.

“Restricting Reconstruction: Occupational Licensing and Natural Disasters” in **The Political Economy of Hurricane Katrina and Community Rebound**. E. Chamlee-Wright and V.H. Storr (eds). Edward Elgar Publisher. 2010: 72-83.

“Adam’s Apple: Using Johnny Appleseed to Teach the Invisible Hand” (with J. Hall) in **Expanding Teaching and Learning Horizons in Economic Education**. F.G. Mixon, Jr. and R.J. Cebula (eds). Nova Science Publishers. 2009: 199-206.

## Book Reviews

---

Review of The Partisan Politics of Law and Order, by Georg Wenzelburger. **Critical Dialogue in Perspectives on Politics**. In Process.

Review of Competing for Control: Gangs and the Social Order of Prisons, by David C. Pyrooz and Scott H. Decker. **Punishment & Society** 22(3) 2020: 386-388.

Review of WTF?! An Economic Tour of the Weird, by Peter T. Leeson **Public Choice** 174 (1-2): 2018: 209-211.

Review of Outlaws of the Atlantic: Sailors, Pirates, and Motley Crews in the Age of Sail, by Marcus Rediker **Journal of Economic History** 74(4) 2014: 1238-1239.

Review of The Modern Prison Paradox: Politics, Punishment, and Social Community, by Amy E. Lerman **Public Choice** 161(3-4) 2014: 537-539.

Review Essay of Prisonomics: Behind Bars in Britain’s Failing Prisons, by Vicky Pryce **Economic Affairs** 34(3) 2014: 411-421.

Review of Mafias on the Move: How Organized Crime Conquers New Territories, by Federico Varese **Public Choice** 151(1-2) 2012: 405-407.

## Awards & Fellowships

---

- 2020 SDAE Prize for the Best Article in Austrian Economics
- 2016 William H. Riker Award, American Political Science Association, Political Economy Section
- 2015 Shortlisted, Bracken Bower Prize, Financial Times and McKinsey & Company
- 2014 Shortlisted, Thinking Allowed Ethnography Award, British Sociological Association & the BBC
- 2014 Winner, Outstanding Publication Award for The Social Order of the Underworld, International Association for the Study of Organized Crime.
- 2013 FEE Prize for Best Article in Austrian Economics, given to “Prison Gangs, Norms, and Organizations”
- 2010 Israel M. Kirzner Award for Outstanding Dissertation in Austrian Economics.
- 2009 Don Lavoie Memorial Essay Contest Winner, Society for the Development of Austrian Economics.
- 2009 Robert K. Merton Award, Horowitz Foundation for Social Policy Research.
- 2006 Global Technology Initiative Scholar, San Jose State University.
- 2004 Winner, James F. Willis Award for Excellence in Economics, San Jose State University

## Academic Talks

---

### Upcoming

2021 University of Washington, Severyns Ravenholt Seminar in Comparative Politics, January 15

- 2021 University of Oxford, ExLegi Seminar Series, February 2
- 2021 Harvard University, David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, February 2
- 2021 Hong Kong University, Department of Sociology, March 2

## **Past**

- 2020 Duke University, Center for the History of Political Economy, August 27
- 2020 Syracuse University, Seminar on Sovereignty, Order, and Conflict, February 24
- 2020 Duke University, Department of Political Science, February 13
- 2019 UC Berkeley, Department of Political Science, November 7
- 2019 Stanford University, Law School, November 5
- 2019 Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas, May 16-17
- 2019 Texas A&M University, Department of Political Science, April 29
- 2019 MIT, Comparative Politics Speaker Series, March 8
- 2018 Harvard University, Political Violence Workshop, December 4
- 2018 Indiana University Bloomington, Ostrom Workshop, September 24
- 2018 University of Connecticut, Department of Economics, 27 March
- 2017 Institutional and Organizational Economics Academy, Corsica, 22-27 May
- 2017 Plenary Lecture at the Public Choice Society Conference, 3 March
- 2017 New York University, Colloquium on Market Institutions & Economic Processes, February 27
- 2017 Oxford University, Seminar for the Study of Violence, 13 February
- 2017 The UK Home Office, 19 January
- 2016 University College London, “Governing the Illegal Cocaine Trade: Workshop” 4 July
- 2016 University of Glasgow, “Inequality, Conflict, and Violence: Workshop” 9-10 June
- 2016 King’s College London, Department of War Studies, 13 May
- 2016 Ministry of Justice, UK, 17 March
- 2015 Keynote Address at “Judicial Symposium on Using the Law & Economics to Reform the System of Criminal Justice,” 10 December
- 2015 London School of Economics, Department of Law, 16 November
- 2015 Trinity College CT, 29 October
- 2015 University of Reading, Department of Politics and International Relations, 27 October
- 2015 Mercatus Center Book Launch, with Peter Reuter and Bert Useem, 19 February
- 2014 University of Bergen, Department of Economics, 18 December
- 2014 University of Strathclyde, Department of Economics, 10 December
- 2014 Oxford University Book Launch, with Sir Paul Collier and Heather Hamill, 27 November
- 2014 Research Institute of Industrial Economics, 5 November
- 2014 University of Middlesex, School of Law, 29 October
- 2014 Chapman University, Economic Science Institute, 12 September
- 2014 UC Berkeley, School of Public Policy, 11 September
- 2014 Santa Clara University School of Law, 10 September
- 2014 Cardiff University, Department of Economics, 5 March
- 2014 George Mason University, Department of Economics, 23 January
- 2014 University of Buckingham, Department of Economics and International Studies, 22 January
- 2013 Texas Tech University, Department of Political Science, 7 November
- 2013 Stanford University, Center for International Security and Cooperation, 19 April
- 2012 National Bureau of Economic Research, Summer Institute, July

## **Teaching**

---

Fellow of the Higher Education Academy: Post-Graduate Certificate in Academic Practice in Higher Education, King’s College London, 2014.

## **PhD Supervision**

Kaustav Chakrabarti  
Danilo Freire, 2018  
Irena Schneider, 2017  
Dalibor Rohac, 2014

## **Brown University**

Extralegal Governance and the Problem of Social Order  
Introduction to Political Economy  
Institutions, Crime, and Violence (graduate)  
Crime, Mafias, and Prison (first-year seminar)

## **UK Home Office**

Five-week course on the economics of crime

## **King's College London**

Economics of Crime  
Political Economy of Organized Crime (graduate)  
Research Methods for Politics  
Principles of Economics

## **Duke University**

The Rule of Law (graduate)  
Analysis of Political Decision Making  
Quantitative Political Analysis

## **Service**

---

2020-2021 Member, Undergraduate Studies Committee, Department of Political Science, Brown  
2019, 2018 Conference Program Committee, Society for Institutional and Organizational Economics.  
2018-2020 Section Officer, Political Economy Section, American Political Science Association  
2017-2022 Director on the Executive Board, Public Choice Society  
2014-2016 Chair, Undergraduate Assessment Sub-Board, King's College London  
2013-2014 Deputy Chair, Undergraduate Assessment Sub-Board, King's College London  
2012-2014 Co-leader, "Regulation, Governance, and Order" research cluster, King's College London

## **Public Lectures**

---

2021 Kennesaw State University, February 9  
2019 California State University, Sacramento, September 24  
2019 San Jose State University, Department of Economics, September 18  
2019 Radford University, April 14  
2019 Endicott College, February 25  
2018 Workshop on Institutional Analysis, Ronald Coase Institute, Bratislava, December 9-15  
2018 Mercer University, February 15.  
2018 Florida Southern University, February 6  
2018 Keynote address at "Criminal (In)Justice and Self-Governance" conference, Texas Tech, February

2017 Kenyon College, Department of Economics, 27 April  
 2017 Ball State University, Department of Economics, 26 April  
 2017 Wabash College, Department of Economics, 25 April  
 2017 Troy University, Manuel H. Johnson Center for Political Economy, February 21  
 2017 Prison Reform Working Group (with Department of Corrections), Montgomery Alabama, February 20  
 2017 University College London, prison reform event, February 16  
 2016 Keynote Lecture at the Friedrich Naumann Foundation Seminar, November 26  
 2016 Bristol Festival of Economics, November 19  
 2016 Volte Face “Betwixt and Between: Prison and Drug Reform”, June 14  
 2016 UCL Mexico Summit, June 13  
 2016 Howard League for Penal Reform, 3 May  
 2016 Anglia Ruskin University, Department of Criminology, 18 April  
 2016 SOAS, 22 February  
 2015 Birkbeck, University of London, 15 October  
 2015 Think conference, 11 July  
 2015 CEVRO Institute, Prague, 2 July  
 2015 Oxford University, 11 May  
 2015 TEDx Warwick, 28 February  
 2014 Institute of Economic Affairs, 8 December  
 2014 University of Warwick, 27 October  
 2014 University of Manchester, 20 October  
 2014 Loyola University, New Orleans, Department of Economics, 18 September  
 2014 Metropolitan State University, Denver, Department of Economics, 15 September  
 2014 San Jose State University, Department of Economics, 8 September  
 2014 Adam Smith Institute panel with Nick Herbert MP, 3 March  
 2013 University of Leuven, March  
 2012 Bryn Mawr College, March  
 2012 Fayetteville State University, School of Business and Economics, March  
 2011 Beloit College, Department of Economics, December  
 2011 James Madison University, Department of Economics, September  
 2011 Western Carolina University, Department of Economics, September  
 2010 Western Carolina University, Department of Economics, September

## Popular & Other Writings

---

2017 “Varieties of Prison Social Order: Extralegal Governance Behind Bars” *The Political Economist*, Fall.  
 2015 “To end prison gangs, it’s time to break up the largest prisons” (w C. Michaluk) *Politico*, June 18.  
 2015 “States shouldn’t backpedal on prison reform” (w C. Michaluk), *Orange County Register*, March 13.  
 2011 “It’s time to get rid of FEMA” (w E. Skarbek) *The Atlantic*, September 12.  
 2005 “Third World Work in the Apparel Industry: No Sweat?” (w B. Powell) *East Valley Tribune*, and *Scottsdale Tribune (AZ)*, June 7.  
 2005 “Don’t get into a lather over sweatshops” (w B. Powell) *Christian Science Monitor*, August 2.

Updated: 20 January 2021