

# David Skarbek

Brown University  
25 George Street, Box 2005  
Providence, RI. 02906  
David\_Skarbek@Brown.edu

---

## POSITIONS

- **Brown University**, Professor of Political Science and Political Economy, since 2023  
Associate Professor of Political Science and Political Economy, 2022-23  
Associate Professor of Political Science, 2017-22
  - **King's College London**, Senior Lecturer in Political Economy, 2015-17  
Lecturer in Political Economy, 2012-15
  - **Duke University**, Searle Visiting Assistant Professor in Political Science, 2010-12
- 

## ADMINISTRATIVE ROLES

- **Director**, Center for Philosophy, Politics, and Economics, Brown University, since 2022
  - **President**, Public Choice Society, 2022-2023
  - **Director of Graduate Studies**, Department of Political Science, Brown University, 2022-2023
- 

## EDUCATION

- **PhD Economics**, George Mason University, 2010
  - **MA Economics**, George Mason University, 2008
  - **BS Economics**, San José State University, 2006
- 

## BOOKS

- **The Puzzle of Prison Order: Why Life Behind Bars Varies around the World.** 2020. New York: Oxford University Press.
  - Winner of the 2021 *Outstanding Book Award* from the Division of International Criminology of the American Society of Criminology.

- Winner of the 2021 *Outstanding Book Award* from the International Section of the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences.
  - Co-Winner of the 2022 *Best Book Award* from the International Association for the Study of Organized Crime.
  - Academic reviews: CHOICE, Comparative Politics, *Delito y Sociedad*, Independent Review, International Criminal Justice Review, International Criminology, Perspectives on Politics (A Critical Dialogue), Public Choice, Quarterly Journal of Austrian Economics, Review of Austrian Economics, Theory in Action
  - **The Decline and Rise of Institutions.** With Liya Palagashvili and Ennio Piano. 2017. New York: Cambridge University Press. Cambridge Elements.
  - **The Social Order of the Underworld: How Prison Gangs Govern the American Penal System.** 2014. New York: Oxford University Press. 2016: Chinese University of Political Science and Law Press.
    - Winner of the 2016 *William H. Riker Award* for Best Book in Political Economy in the previous three years, from the Political Economy Section of the American Political Science Association.
    - Winner of the 2014 *Outstanding Publication Award* from the International Association for the Study of Organized Crime.
    - Shortlisted for the 2014 *Thinking Allowed Ethnography Award* from the British Sociological Association and the BBC.
    - Academic reviews: American Journal of Sociology, British Journal of Criminology, Cato Journal, Contemporary Sociology, Criminal Justice Review, Economic Affairs, 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: The Atlantic, BBC, Business Insider, The Economist, Estado de São Paulo, Forbes, The Independent, Marginal Revolution, The Times.
- 

## ARTICLES

- **“The Political Economy of Criminal Governance.”** *Public Choice*. 2024.

- **“Vigilantism and Institutions: Understanding Attitudes toward Lynching in Brazil.”** With Danilo Freire. *Research and Politics*. 2023.
- **“Analytic Narratives in Political Economy.”** With Emily Skarbek. *History of Political Economy*. 2023.
- **“The Organization of Danish Gangs: A Transaction Cost Approach.”** With Stefan Sløk-Madsen, Andreas Hansen, and Alexander Rezaei. *Trends in Organized Crime*. 2021.
- **“The Evolution of Norms within a Society of Captives.”** With Chad Seagren. *Journal of Economic Interaction and Coordination*. 2021.
- **“Institutional Design and Elite Support for Climate Policies.”** With Danilo Freire and Umberto Mignozzetti. *Journal of Experimental Political Science*. 2021.
- **“Qualitative Research Methods for Institutional Analysis”** *Journal of Institutional Economics*. 2020.
  - Lead article, with three comments published in response.
  - Shortlisted for the 2021 *Elinor Ostrom Prize* from the World Interdisciplinary Network for Institutional Research.
  - Winner of the 2020 *Best Article Prize* from the Society for the Development of Austrian Economics.
- **“Covenants without the Sword? Comparing Prison Self-Governance Globally.”** *American Political Science Review*. 2016.
- **“Criminal Rituals.”** With Peng Wang. *Global Crime*. 2015.
- **“Prison Gangs and the Community Responsibility System.”** With M. Garrett Roth. *Review of Behavioral Economics*. 2014.
- **“The Effect of Prison Gang Membership on Recidivism.”** With Brendan Dooley and Alan Seals. *Journal of Criminal Justice*. 2014.
- **“Why Didn’t Slaves Revolt More Often During the Middle Passage?”** With Andrew Marcum. *Rationality & Society*. 2014.
- **“The Governance Institutions of a Drug Trafficking Organization.”** With James Kostelnik. *Public Choice*. 2013.

- **“The Industrial Organization of Street Gangs.”** With Russell Sobel. *Journal of Gang Research*. 2012.
- **“Anarchy, Groups, and Conflict: An Experiment on the Emergence of Protective Associations.”** With Adam Smith and Bart Wilson. *Social Choice & Welfare*. 2012.
- **“Prison Gangs, Norms, and Organizations.”** *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*. 2012.
  - Winner of a 2015 *Emerald Citation of Excellence Award* for outstanding research from the Emerald Publishing Group.
  - Winner of the 2013 *Best Article Prize* from the Society for the Development of Austrian Economics.
- **“Sweatshops, Opportunity Costs, and Non-Monetary Compensation: Evidence from El Salvador.”** With Emily Skarbek, Brian Skarbek, and Erin Skarbek. *American Journal of Economics & Sociology*. 2012.
- **“Governance and Prison Gangs.”** *American Political Science Review*. 2011.
  - Reprinted in *The Economics of Governance*. Edited by Donald Wittman. Edward Elgar Publisher, 2016.
  - Reprinted in *Transnational Organized Crime*. Edited by James Sheptycki. Sage Publications, 2014.
- **“Putting the ‘Con’ into Constitutions: The Economics of Prison Gangs.”** *Journal of Law, Economics, & Organization*. 2010.
- **“Criminal Constitutions.”** With Peter Leeson. *Global Crime*. 2010.
- **“Self-Governance in San Pedro Prison.”** *The Independent Review*. 2010.
- **“Sweatshops Wages and Third World Living Standards: Are the Jobs Worth the Sweat?”** With Benjamin Powell. *Journal of Labor Research*. 2006.

---

## GRANTS, AWARDS, FELLOWSHIPS

- **2022 Co-Winner Best Book Award**, for *The Puzzle of Prison Order*, from the International Association for the Study of Organized Crime
- **2021 Ronald Coase Institute Award for Outstanding Achievement**
- **2021 Outstanding Book Award**, for *The Puzzle of Prison Order*, from the Division of International Criminology of the American Society of Criminology.
- **2021 Outstanding Book Award**, for *The Puzzle of Prison Order*, from the International Section of the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences.
- **2020 Best Article Prize**, for “Qualitative Research Methods for Institutional Analysis” from the Society for the Development of Austrian Economics.
- **2020 Research Grant**, Centre for the Study of Governance & Society at King’s College London for a project on vigilantism. With Danilo Freire. \$10,000.
- **2019-2020, Visiting Scholar**, Center for the Study of Law & Society, University of California, Berkeley.
- **2017 Plenary Lecture** on “Governance without Government” at the Public Choice Society Conference, 3 March.
- **2016 William H. Riker Award**, for *The Social Order of the Underworld*, from the Political Economy Section of the American Political Science Association.
- **2015 Shortlisted, Bracken Bower Prize**, Financial Times and McKinsey & Company.
- **2014 Shortlisted, Thinking Allowed Ethnography Award**, for *The Social Order of the Underworld*, from the British Sociological Association and the BBC.
- **2014 Outstanding Publication Award**, for *The Social Order of the Underworld*, from the International Association for the Study of Organized Crime.
- **2014 Earhart Foundation Research Grant**, for project on global prison orders. \$16,500.

- **2013 Best Article Prize**, for “Prison Gangs, Norms, and Organizations” from the Society for the Development of Austrian Economics.
- **2012 Earhart Foundation Research Grant**, for the study of California prison gangs. \$20,500.
- **2008 Robert K. Merton Award**, Horowitz Foundation for Social Policy Research, for a project that addresses the relationship between Social Theory and Public Policy.
- **2004 James F. Willis Award for Excellence in Economics**, given to the “Outstanding Undergraduate Student” in the Department of Economics at San José State University.

---

#### RECENT INVITED PRESENTATIONS (SELECTED)

2023 Texas Tech University, November 10  
 2022 The UK Ministry of Justice, September 22  
 2021 Notre Dame, Kroc-Kellogg Peace, Conflict, Crime and Violence Workshop, April 28  
 2021 Hong Kong University, Department of Sociology, March 2  
 2021 Harvard University, David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, February 2  
 2021 University of Oxford, ExLegi Seminar Series, February 2  
 2021 University of Washington, Severyns Ravenholt Seminar in Comparative Politics, Jan. 15  
 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 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

---

#### TEACHING

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

- **Undergraduate**  
Introduction to Political Economy  
Crime, Punishment, and Politics  
Analysis of Political Decision Making
- **Graduate**  
Institutions, Crime, and Violence  
Political Economy of Organized Crime

## PH.D. SUPERVISION

Ricardo Noe (committee member, UT Dallas, in progress)  
 Amber Morris (committee member, Syracuse University, in progress)  
 Manuel Moscoso Rojas (co-chair, Brown University, in progress)  
 Connor Staggs (committee member, Brown University, in progress)  
 Eva Rios (co-chair, Brown University, in progress)  
 Kaustav Chakrabati (committee member, Brown University, 2021)  
 Jennifer Peirce (committee member, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, 2021)  
 Irena Schneider (co-chair, King's College London, 2017)  
 Dalibor Rohac (chair, King's College London, 2014)

## SERVICE

1. To the profession
  - Public Choice Society, President 2022-2023, Director 2017-2022
  - American Political Science Association, Section Officer of the Political Economy Section, 2018 to 2020.
  - Society for Institutional and Organizational Economics, Conference Program Committee member, 2018 and 2019.
  - Ostrom Workshop, Indiana University Bloomington, External Affiliate, since 2018.
  - European Consortium of Political Research, Member of the Standing Group on Organized Crime, since 2015.
  - Extra-legal Governance Institute, University of Oxford, Associate Member, since 2013.
  - Member of the editorial boards of *Global Crime* and *Incarceration*
  - Manuscript conferences for three faculty (Eduardo Moncada, Jake Monahan, Andrew Miller)
2. To the university
  - Director of the Center for Philosophy, Politics, and Economics, since 2022

- Member of postdoc (2023) and faculty hiring committees (2022, 2023)
- Member, Committee on Academic Programs and Faculty Affairs in the School of Professional Studies
- Member, Steering Committee on the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution
- Advising first-year and second year students
- 3. To the department
  - Director of Graduate Studies, 2022 to 2023.
  - Member of the Undergraduate Committee, 2020 to 2022.
  - Member of the hiring committee for International Political Economy, 2018
- 4. To the Political Theory Project
  - Interim Director, 2022, Joint faculty, 2017-2022
  - Search committee member, postdoctoral associates, 2017 to 2022.
  - Member of the hiring committee for joint hire with the Philosophy Department, 2020
  - Lead role in undergraduate programming and mentoring postdoctoral associates