
A Letter from the Editors

To new and returning readers alike,

Welcome back to SPICE, this year's bi-annual journal of the Philosophy, Politics, and Economics department at the University of Pennsylvania. What an exciting opportunity to be able to publish two issues of SPICE this year! PPE is one of the most popular majors in the School of Arts and Sciences, thus, it is fitting to have more than one opportunity to showcase the talent in and around the major.

For the past two years, we have considered the idea of picking articles based on a common theme or topic, but we would have only published two articles this issue if we used that selection framework. A theme does not have to be that narrow, as we have come to learn from repeatedly confronting the feasibility of restraining the scope of the publication. The papers in this issue are all bold calls to action. Two of our papers make opposite claims about sentencing the death penalty. The third calls on federal governments to actively address the growing challenges of an aging population, while the fourth calls for a confrontation of both positive and negative associations with certain religions to confront and understand implicit biases.

Each are well-argued proposals, revealing the omnipresent challenge of policy creation and implementation: finding the ideal balance between fact and opinion. Facts are critical to this process, but our beliefs inform how we use and understand that information. The line between fact and opinion is increasingly blurry, making policy change feel more like an ideological battle than one of reason. Though it may seem desirable to live in a world where everyone agrees with each other, history has shown that this system, too, creates winners and losers. It is humbling and a privilege to be able to engage with vastly different opinions. Indeed, how else would we know where our arguments are weak and what assumptions are ill-founded?

Though “gridlock” is a buzzword of the time, our society is perpetually dynamic, and therefore depends on everyone to be a part. The stratification of opinions allows for the continued push-and-pull of policies, which keeps us challenging norms and challenging the beliefs of those with whom we disagree, thus keeping those things in motion for ourselves as a result. This issue of SPICE continues that motion, by presenting arguments that will oppose the opinions of some readers, reinforce those of others, and persuade some either in favor or otherwise. We are grateful to have the opportunity to contribute to the momentum, even if only in a small way.

Thank you to our editorial board, consisting of Jay Choi, Annika Iyer, and Julia Hansen, each of whom contributed critical insight in both the selection and the editing of the published works. Despite all coming from the same major, we represent three of the five concentrations between the five of us, giving us different lenses from which we analyze and edit the papers we receive. And thank you to our associate director Dr. Doug Paletta, who has provided critical support in actualizing the journal, and who has helped us uphold its high standards.

We are all graduating, meaning we leave SPICE in the hands of an entirely new editorial board. But, we have the utmost confidence that they will continue to use it as we have, soliciting and selecting pieces that challenge their opinions and world view, thus similarly challenging and engaging our readers.

With that, we will leave you to interact with the published works. We urge you to consider how and why you agree and disagree with what is written. Your beliefs on the addressed issues will be better off for it.

Yours,

Chloe Wilson and Patrick Law

Editors-in-Chief