

## Robert Booth Fowler

Robert Booth Fowler, legendary teacher, scholar, and mentor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, died suddenly from complications of a rare disease on January 13, 2024. This news came as a shock to the thousands of former students and many colleagues who were touched by his dynamic presence. One of the most beloved teachers in the history of the University of Wisconsin, and a great colleague and friend, he will be sorely missed.

Booth Fowler was born on May 16, 1940, in Niagara Falls, New York. He graduated from Haverford College and received his doctorate in political science from Harvard University, where he studied under the eminent direction of V. O. Key, Michael Walzer, and Louis Hartz. Though one can see their influence in his scholarship on political thought and electoral history, his eclectic interests encompassed inquiries into religion and politics, feminist history, environmental thought, and community.

Fowler joined the Political Science Department at the University of Wisconsin in 1967, and retired after 35 years in 2002. During his last years on the faculty, he directed and served as Howe Chair of Integrated Liberal Studies, offering packed courses on political thought and literature, enthraling students as he had earlier with his dramatic personifications of great thinkers. After retirement he continued offering popular courses in continuing education.

Booth took a phenomenological approach to teaching. He believed that the best way to convey the ideas of great thinkers was by seeing the world as they did, taking their ideas so seriously as to argue as they would. Former students remember being assigned to play the roles of different thinkers in lively class exchanges. Graduate teaching assistants were sometimes conscripted to assume roles for class dialogues. As he aged, Booth's own approach to teaching became bolder. In his last years his courses were based entirely on embodied teaching, in which he brought thinkers to life by coming in role every class, never breaking the fourth wall. Students not only heard directly from Plato, Augustine, Nietzsche, Emerson, or Wollstonecraft, for example, but could argue with them, question them, even challenge them. It was magic.

As a young assistant professor, Booth Fowler arrived on campus at a famously tumultuous time in Madison, and he actively participated in protests against the Vietnam war. This may surprise a generation of later students who recall what seemed like a more conservative temperament. But Booth was a genuine enigma, who kept students guessing about his own political or philosophical views. He later described his intellectual perspective as "part Enlightenment liberal, part Burkean conservative, part Emersonian anarchist, and part religious existentialist." As his colleague Donald Downs observed, "One looks in vain across the landscape of higher education for another such intellectual personality."

Religion was always important to Booth, and his own spiritual journey took him from Episcopal roots to Quaker Fellowship to the Catholic Church. Asked to describe his religiously existentialist approach, he replied, enigmatically, that beauty was central to his faith.

As a scholar Booth Fowler demonstrated wide interests, a penetrating eye, and originality. These traits resulted in a crucial interplay between his research and teaching. His first published

book, *Contemporary Issues in Political Theory* (1977), with Jeffrey Orenstein, a former doctoral student, reflected this desire to help students grasp the central themes of what he was teaching.

Booth Fowler's extended inquiry into the history of American liberalism, with all its power and paradoxes, was launched with *Believing Sceptics: American Political Intellectuals 1945-1964* (1978). As he argues, while post-war intellectuals saw themselves as realists and skeptics, they were indeed believers in liberalism. This work was followed by *Unconventional Partners: Religion and Liberal Culture in the United States* (1989). The book's argument was vintage Booth: that religious life enables liberalism to endure in American society by providing what it lacks—community, fellowship, moral certitudes, and aesthetic dimensions. The yearning for community in a culture that celebrates individualism was captured by Booth's next book, *The Dance with Community: The Contemporary Debate Within American Political Thought* (1991), a true gem. The capstone of this extended probing was *Enduring Liberalism: American Political Thought Since the 1960s* (1999), published on the eve of the new millennium. Here Booth reprises both the power of liberal thought in America and its enduring dilemmas.

This corpus represents a distinguished contribution, but Booth Fowler's interest in religion launched an additional series of inquiries. *A New Engagement: Evangelical Political Thought, 1966-1976* (1982), is a foundational work in what at the time was the nascent field of religion and politics. Shortly after publishing that book, which explores the interplay of religion and political ideas, Booth circulated the original petition to create the Religion and Politics Section of APSA. He then enlisted a succession of former doctoral students to co-author a textbook, *Religion and Politics in America: Faith, Culture, and Strategic Choices* (1995-2019), now in its sixth edition. Distinctive for its focus on history and culture, this text also reflects Booth's keen interest in the strategic empirical realities that confront religious political actors. Returning to his interest in political thought, Booth wrote *The Greening of Protestant Thought* (1995), an account of how environmental thinking from Earth Day onward influenced Protestant theologians and intellectuals and reflected the splits between mainline liberal and fundamentalist conservative responses to environmental concerns.

The range of Booth's scholarship is exemplified by a thoroughly original work of historical reclamation, *Carrie Catt: Feminist Politician* (1988). In this book, now a standard reference in feminist history, Fowler documents Catt's role as a key political strategist of the suffragist movement. A longstanding member of the National 19th Amendment Society, he wrote the book as a tribute to his mother, who knew and admired Catt.

After retirement, Booth returned to an enduring passion for voting behavior by publishing *Wisconsin Votes: An Electoral History* (2008), the first full history of voting in Wisconsin from statehood in 1848 to the new millennium. Not just a summary of voting behavior, the book recounts the early significance of slavery, the fierce struggle for women's suffrage, the impact of third-party movements, and the great figures of Wisconsin political history.

For many thousands of former students, however, Booth Fowler was a teaching legend, a true master. Undergraduates flocked to Booth's classes because of his reputation, so no matter their academic major they experienced liberal education at its best. They were held captive by his passionate, penetrating,

and dynamic lectures, which they recall with vividness, even decades later. Graduate students, in turn, were challenged to think deeply and critically, and to care passionately about teaching. Those who became college professors cannot help but channel his spirit, so his impact ripples into the future.

UW department chairs and colleagues note that when traveling the country to meet with alumni, invariably Booth Fowler comes up in conversation, not only as a favorite teacher, but as someone who made students think, changed their lives, and launched their careers.

Booth challenged his students to lead examined lives, to answer for themselves the timeless question: How shall we live? His legacy is as much about how to be a good human as anything else. He loved students, and many of us remember the numerous kindnesses he extended. As a testament to his impact, former students, colleagues, and acolytes endowed in his honor a chair in the UW Political Science Department, the Robert Booth Fowler Professorship.

In retirement Booth was a model social capitalist (as Robert Putnam would say), giving local talks, participating in numerous card groups and book clubs, keeping up with former students and colleagues, gracing family gatherings, and actively volunteering for his church. A longtime member of St. Paul's Catholic Student Center on the Madison campus, he served as chair of the church board, librarian, and historian. He published *Cath-*

*olics on State Street: A History of St. Paul's in Madison* (2012). Based on archival research and interviews, the book presents a lively account of the century of the church's history, including the controversies!

Booth's life was also a love story. Together with his soulmate and beloved wife of 35 years, Alice Joy Honeywell, they hiked national parks, enjoyed foreign films, and relished time with friends and family. Booth especially enjoyed cheering on Alice's biking adventures. When she and a friend biked from Oregon to Maine and wrote a book about it, *Across America by Bicycle: Alice and Bobbi's Summer on Wheels* (2010), Booth became its most enthusiastic promoter. Blessedly, just weeks before his illness emerged, Booth was also able to attend the joyous wedding celebration of his beloved son, Ben. For those of us who knew Booth, and loved him, his absence is unfathomable.

Thankfully the UW Political Science Department recorded a 2019 interview with Booth on its podcast, so we can hear again his voice, his laughter, and his incisive wit: [https://soundcloud.com/user-311056976-906363553/prof-emeritus-rob-ert-booth-fowler-on-a-life-spent-learning?utm\\_source=clipboard&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=social\\_sharing](https://soundcloud.com/user-311056976-906363553/prof-emeritus-rob-ert-booth-fowler-on-a-life-spent-learning?utm_source=clipboard&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=social_sharing). ■

— Allen D. Hertzke, *University of Oklahoma*;  
Laura R. Olson, *Clemson University*;  
and Kevin R. den Dulk, *Calvin University*

## Johan Galtung

Johan Galtung, an international researcher and public intellectual, passed away on 17 February at 93. He was an innovative scholar, an academic entrepreneur, and a lecturer world-wide.

He was born in Oslo on 24 October 1930. 15 years later, this date would see the founding of the United Nations. There is something symbolic about having the same birthday as the UN. As a researcher, Galtung's orientation was unusually international. An excellent linguist, he was well-travelled and made his home in several countries.

He was a person of exceptional energy. Following a double high-school degree, he completed two MA degrees (in statistics and sociology) and went on to hold professorships in several fields and in many countries. In his younger years, he signed a pledge not to take the old Norwegian doctoral degree, but he came to hold honorary doctorates from a range of universities. After establishing what would become the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) in 1959, he founded the *Journal of Peace Research* in 1964. Neither of these would have become what they are today without the impetus that Galtung gave them in their early years. He also played a crucial role in nurturing young aspiring peace researchers in the other Nordic countries. In 1969, he became the first Professor of Conflict and Peace Research at the University of Oslo. While this was not a personal chair, it would never have been established if Galtung's supporters at the University and in political circles had not known that there would be at least one committed and competent applicant. At the time, the establishment of a new Norwegian University chair had to be approved by Parliament. Galtung was not yet 40 when he was appointed, but in a sense, it was already too late. Sabbaticals and leaves of absence abroad became more frequent and lengthier, and in 1978 he resigned—explain-

ing his decision with reference to the spirit of the 1968 student protests: no one should hold a professorship for more than 10 years. Now came teaching positions in many other countries, including political science at the University of Hawaii for over a decade. He also taught methodology in the Sociology department at Columbia University for a few years around 1960, invited by Paul Lazarsfeld, and international relations at Princeton in the mid-1980s, in addition to guest professorships at a large number of universities world-wide.

Galtung's first projects at PRIO resulted in a series of articles in *Journal of Peace Research*. They continue to be his most cited works and concerned topics such as structural violence, concepts of peace, international news dissemination, imperialism, international diplomacy, and the role of summits in international relations. Together with philosopher Arne Næss, he was also a pioneer of efforts to codify Gandhi's ideas about non-violence and conflict management.

After Galtung left PRIO and moved to the University of Oslo and later to his international career, he also reoriented his scholarship in many ways. He became less interested in the pursuit of statistical regularities and developed instead a program for overcoming invariances. His public remarks became more acerbic and polemical, gaining him many critics. He never had problems attracting students and collaborators, but many of us, his students from his years of scholarly entrepreneurship in Scandinavia, found it difficult to follow him in his new orientation. As a scholarly field, peace research became more accepted, and as some would argue, more conventional. Johan could be extremely critical, suggesting, for example, that PRIO should change its name to something like the Norwegian Institute for Security Research. It was with a certain sense of unease that some of us opened his autobiography, *Johan uten land* (John Lackland), which was published on his 70th birthday, and then 10 years later, his *Launching Peace Studies: The First PRIO*