

BEST BOOK AWARD 2008

The Best Book Award committee consisting of Steve Pfaff, Gwen Moore, Dana Fischer, and Bayliss Camp received 24 valid entries and 5 books were identified as finalists. Of the submissions, the committee decided to award the prize to **Javier Auyero** for his book ***Routine Politics and Violence in Argentina: The Gray Zone of State Power*** (Cambridge University Press 2007). The Committee praised Auyero's book as an exemplary work of political ethnography. Auyero's book advances the study of political protest by helping to reveal the conditions under which the distinction between institutional and non-institutional political behavior collapses. In the Argentine crisis of 2001, riot, looting, and public disturbances were not simply violations of 'law and order' but were triggered and abetted by political authorities, including party organizations and local officials as part of a concerted political strategy. Auyero calls this the 'grey zone', between politics and crime. In addition to extensive ethnographic observation and in-depth interviewing, Auyero also employs statistical analysis to help explain the location and intensity of rioting. With its comparative focus on an important Latin American case, its innovative and mixed methodology, and provocative theses on contentious politics, Auyero's book is bound to be influential.

We would also like to make an honorable mention for another impressive, innovative work that came close to winning the award. This is **Clem Brooks' and Jeff Manza's** ***Why Welfare States Persist: The Importance of Public Opinion in Democracies*** (University of Chicago Press 2007).