

Christopher Hitchens

PF&R Award Winner on Prizes, Partisanship, Polls and More



Hitchens

Christopher Hitchens, 1995 winner of the Qualitative Studies Division's Professional Freedom and Responsibility Award, is a columnist for The Nation and Vanity Fair. A graduate of Balliol College, Oxford (1970), where he studied philosophy, politics and economics, his most recent book is The Missionary Position: Mother Theresa in Theory and Practice.

Here are (all too few) of his witty and wide-ranging remarks upon accepting the QS Award. They were excerpted by Peter Parisi.

Journalism Awards

They have come to be a complete racket in my profession now, like party favors.... A journalist without a prize looks like a dog without a tail, and I've set my face sternly against this. When Murray Kempton got [the Pulitzer Prize], I remember writing to him, saying I thought no less of him for the award. Especially since very often for awards, such as the Pulitzer, you have to apply for them; your employers have to compete for them; entrance fees have be paid for them; bureaucratic log rolling has to occur at the conventions in order for them to be distributed among the prestige press. I think a great loser in this is the integrity of the trade (as I think of it—"craft," sometimes; "trade," all the time; "calling", we hope, we wish). And very few of these prizes bring any money—so it makes them easier to turn down.

I had thought of writing back [to the Qualitative Studies Division], saying I would like to come because I don't want to miss the chance of speaking to a captive audience, but may I accept perhaps the freedom and decline the responsibility part of the citation, because press ethics and journalistic ethics and integrity matters are things that instantly send me scuttling for the fire exit and looking for the bomb-proof shelter. Whenever they're discussed, I can feel another tightening of the noose around the neck. But, that said, it seemed to me that since, there wasn't any money, since there wasn't any log

rolling, since I didn't have to propose myself for it, since my employer didn't have to lobby for it, it would be very much in your spirit if I was to accept it, and I do so with pride and gratitude.

Partisanship

This is a culture where, after all, you get high points...if you're capable of offering, say, the following sentence: "Well, Bill (or Jake, or Cokey, or whoever the ghastly moderator might be), what I think this needs is more light and less heat."

You know, everything we know—scientifically as well as morally, emotionally, everything we've learned from literature, everything we know about the origins of our universe—says that you can't have light without heat. Heat is the only source of light. Do they know another source of light? No, they don't. Do they think it's smart to say that? Yes, they do.

Let me ask you another question in rhetorical form. When did you last see The New York Times not use the word "partisan" as a pejorative? When did you last see The New York Times not use the word "bi-partisan" as a recommendation?

(continued on page 4)

Inside This Issue

Headnote addressPage 2

World Wide Web infoPage 3

Call for papers.....Page 3

More from Hitchens.....Page 4

Division name change? ..Page 6

QS ON THE WWW

What's There and What For

JAY HAMILTON, S.U.N.Y. GENESEO

What's this World Wide Web stuff, and why should QS care enough to develop its own home page?

Fine question, especially when considering its merciless hype as The Next Greatest Thing. Its most active development too often seems to be as a marketing research tool for transnational corporations and an "alternative" way to marvel at the neat things

(continued on page 3)

Headnote:**QS issues and opportunities**

 BONNIE BRENNEN, VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY

Describing the Qualitative Studies division of AEJMC is a bit like defining pornography—it's frequently difficult to articulate a concise definition but ultimately we know what it is when we see it. Recent discussions among QS division members have focused on the continuing role of our division in AEJMC as well as descriptions of the type of research that should be encouraged by the division. In addition, there has been a move to consider the possibility of a name change that could more accurately represent what our division is all about. Certainly all of these are important issues that will continue to be discussed among members and officers of the Qualitative Studies Division.



As this year's division head I look forward to working with the other QS officers: William Solomon, vice head; Sylvia Sholar, secretary; Ana Garner, research chair; Elli Lester, teaching standards committee chair; Karon Speckman and Orayb Najjar, Professional Freedom and Responsibility committee members; and Robin Larson and Jay Hamilton, QS News editors.

With such a distinguished group of officers, I envision a wonderful year for our division. Yet, the continued success of QS rests not only with board members but with all of the members of the division. There are a variety of ways for each of you to get involved with plans for the 1997 AEJMC convention in Chicago including: volunteering to judge research papers; submitting a

research paper for the paper competition; serving as a session moderator or discussant; and attending the business meeting to discuss and vote on division issues and policies.

One other way that you can serve QS is to take a few minutes and look back at the history of our division. The creation of the Qualitative Studies Division has been important not only to its individual members but to the larger history of AEJMC. Founders of QS opposed the prevailing political climate which excluded certain theoretical foundations as well as particular types of research. More than merely accepting qualitative research, our division has showcased work that is theoretical, political, non-traditional, and cutting edge.

It is important that the history of our division be preserved. And so, in conjunction with the oral history committee for the History Division, I am asking for your help. Perhaps you know of a faculty member who has been instrumental in the development of the Qualitative Studies Division; if you do, please send me his or her name and current affiliation. If any of you would like to conduct an interview with any of our division pioneers, let me know and I'll get you started. And to those senior members of our division, please consider setting down your experiences on audio tape. Ask someone in your department to interview you regarding your affiliation with the Qualitative Studies Division and then send the tape to me. I will take care of forwarding it to the Wisconsin Historical Society, where the other oral histories of AEJMC members are stored. If you are willing to be interviewed and don't have someone to help you with the process, please let me know and I'll do my best to coordinate it. We can even conduct some of these interviews next summer in Chicago.

Ultimately, by preserving our history, we may be able to insure that future members of QS will continue to recognize the division when they see it. ❖

Qualitative Studies Division 1996-1997**Head**

BONNIE BRENNEN
Virginia Commonwealth University

Vice-Head

WILLIAM SOLOMON
Rutgers University

Secretary

SYLVIA SHOLAR
California University of
Pennsylvania

Research Committee Chair

ANA GARNER
Marquette University

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**Professional Freedom and
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KARON SPECKMAN
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S.U.N.Y. Geneseo

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California State University at
San Bernadino

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BOLIVIA GENOVESE

(WWW, continued from page 1)

developers do while going blind from the still too-fuzzy computer screen.

Yet its access to counter-political and media groups highlights its usefulness not only as a means of delivering information, and a means of helping produce grassroots social movements.

No groundswell has yet emerged, but that's not due to not trying. A substantial number of activist groups are working to bring a heightened awareness of social inequities, but also to provide a means of acting on that awareness.

So that QS members (and anyone else) have an entry point into counter-political movements, the division now has a web site which provides links to such groups. Of course, it isn't exhaustive, but follow those links and you never know what you'll find.

How to get to the QS web page

- Go to the AEJMC web page (<http://www.aejmc.sc.edu/online/home.html>), then navigate down from there.
- Or go directly to the QS web page (<http://www.geneseo.edu/~comm/qs/index.html>).

Counter-political and media links

Media groups: Union for Democratic Communication, CounterMedia, Music and Politics - Rock & Rap

Confidential, proceedings from the Media and Democracy Congress.

General activist groups: The Center for Voting and Democracy, ACLU, Center for Campus Organizing.

Progressive media organizations: The Nation, Pacifica News.

General political movements: Active Transformation, The New Party, Refuse and Resist, Social Justice Connections.

What else is there

The QS site also contains:

- The names and positions of all QS officers with links to e-mail them directly from the page.
- A "convention board" for members. If you're attending a conference and would like to see if other QS members are going (perhaps to share a room or to meet up with sometime while there), an e-mail message sent to me will be posted on this page for others to get in touch with you.
- A synopsis of the current QS newsletter, featuring portions of comments by Christopher Hitchens during his acceptance of the division's Professional Freedom and Responsibility award made in Anaheim last August.

Any comments or suggestions for additions or changes should be directed to me either at hamilton@uno.cc.geneseo.edu or (716) 245-5223. ❖

QUALITATIVE STUDIES DIVISION

Call for Papers

1997 AEJMC Convention, Chicago

The Qualitative Studies Division invites submission of original research papers that are interdisciplinary in focus and theoretically grounded. We welcome a wide range of approaches, methodologies and perspectives including but not limited to cultural studies, historical studies, feminist scholarship, news analysis, political economy, literary analysis, qualitative methodologies, philosophy of communication, ethics, and media criticism.

Preferred length 7,500 words, (approx. 25 pages). Note: 6 copies of the 75-word abstract should be submitted. Authors should follow AEJMC guidelines for paper submission published in the January issue of AEJMC News. Papers that do not meet the guidelines or are postmarked after April 1, 1997 will not be accepted.

Send papers to:

Ana C. Garner, Department of Journalism, Marquette University, P.O. Box 1881, Milwaukee, WI 53201-1881, (414), 288-7383, e-mail: Garnera@vms.csd.mu.edu. ❖

Call for Papers on Teaching

AEJMC's Teaching Standards Committee is seeking papers for a special convention session that will promote excellence in teaching.

The committee is looking for papers in a variety of topics and methodologies. Applicants can submit papers that encourage excellence in teaching of any type and at any level: undergraduate, graduate, distance, etc.

All papers should be no longer than 25 pages, including endnotes and tables. They should include a rigorous analysis of the findings—an analysis that suggests some direction for the future. Teaching tips or papers on curriculum design are not appropriate for this competition.

However, teaching activities which include a careful, systematic assessment of results are encouraged.

Those submitting papers should send one original and four copies, including a 250-word abstract. A cover page (which should be attached only to the original) should list the name, title, address, affiliation, and office and home telephone numbers of each author. Faculty who include a self-addressed, stamped envelope or postcard will be notified of their paper's arrival.

All entries must be sent to Fred Fedler, School of Communication, University of Central Florida, Orlando, Fla., 32816-1344. Phone: 407-823-2839

or 407-365-6974. They should be postmarked by April 1, 1997. Faxes will not be accepted.

The best papers will be presented at AEJMC's 1997 convention in Chicago. The authors of the top three papers will be awarded plaques, and the best papers will also be submitted to *Journalism & Mass Communication Educator* for consideration by its editor.

For more information, contact Fedler or Marilyn Kern-Foxworth, chair of AEJMC's Teaching Standards Committee, Department of Journalism, Texas A&M University, 230 Reed McDonald, College Station, Texas, 77843-4111. Phone: 409-845-4611. ❖

(HITCHENS, *continued from page 1*)

What are the implications of this? (Always look to the language.) We live in a consensual society; a very high price is set on the appearance of agreement.

What does it mean that The New York Times and ABC News and CNN and the White House Press Office and Sen. Dole's press office all say that, if they can call something bi-partisan, they have said it is good, and if they can say it's partisan, its automatically, axiomatically bad? What they are saying is, "My God, if it went on any longer like this, we'd have a two-party system."

What is the...necessary corollary of that? Well, we have a one-party system now.

Is that what they teach you in school? No, it's not. Is it the fact of the matter? Yes, it is. Does the language disclose it? With perfect ease, in the most ordinary commonplaces.

Polls

[Journalism] is responsible for foisting [polls] on the people as a substitute for democracy—almost now as a substitute for politics. It's a way people are now told what they think.

The opinion polls will say, "Ninety-two percent of Americans say they want strong leaders." Did they say that when they were asked, "Do you want strong leaders, yes, no and so forth?" Did the question shape the answer? The answer is obviously, yes.

People stopped to be asked "What's your most long-felt want" don't say, "Strong leadership from Kansas."... But they will absorb the results, and a bandwagon effect is very easy to create that way. People do not spend this money finding out what people think. They spend it finding out ways to

change the way they think. That's what opinion polls are supposed to do. It's a matter not of measurement, but manipulation.

Creationism

Creationism seems to me not to be very flattering to the deity.... Of our planet, a good half of it is too damned hot, and the other bit too damned cold. It's a knife edge in the middle, and we know now that knife edge is wavering climatically. Of the other planets, they're all either too damned hot or too damned cold to sustain life.... What kind of an achievement is this?

The Left

The Left is far too much afflicted with the idea of being a defeated minority and thus so pathetically grateful for anything that looks like the possibility of a small alliance with somebody.... Take, for example, the genuinely servile and credulous argument that one must always give one's vote to the Democratic ticket on the grounds that it's the lesser evil. That's an argument that can only be emitted by someone who has really eaten the bread of humiliation. If you think that the two-party consensus is the evil—which is the only intelligent way to think about it—then where's the scope for lesser evil within that?

Unmasked Questions

Ralph Reed, [Pat Robertson's] front man, has been sold to my profession as...the new, fresh, young, sexless, acceptable face of the Christian Coalition.... I've never seen anybody ask Reed, "Listen, man, your boss says whoever's nominated in San Diego—if he wins—isn't going to serve out his term because of Armageddon. What do you say to that?"

Now isn't that a perfectly fair question? I would say by any definition it is in fact a necessary question. If a journalist doesn't ask it, he isn't doing his job....

It's considered not a fit subject for discussion publicly, so people are unprepared to argue about it, and then, when they do, they're accused of being anti-Christian, so they instantly back off.

*When did you last see
The New York Times
not use the word
"bi-partisan" as a
recommendation?*

No
journalist
wants to be
accused of intolerance.
A very big weapon in the disciplining of the consensus is the fear of the accusation of being insensitive....
There's a way the whole idea of multi-cultural pluralism has been degraded into a set of taboos and simply demarcated etiquettes—this would really repay inspection. And it's part of what I say is the collapse of the defense mechanism of a free society. It isn't willing to stick up for its own values anymore for fear of giving offense.

Objectivity

In journalism [objectivity] is confused with being even-handed, which it's not because its very unlikely that the truth will lie anywhere between two propositions. It will usually be one or the other.... I'm in the Dictionary of Quotations...for saying that the truth never lies, but when it does lie, it lies somewhere in between.

It's a mantra of American journalism that any position taken between two other positions—the moderate one—must be the best. Impartiality, fair-mindedness, even-handedness—all of those things are privileged attributes, all confused with objectivity, with which they have nothing in common at all.

Objectivity says you'll search for what you think is the case no matter what, and you'll consider yourself to be an object, not a subject, while that's going on, try and discard all conflicting interests. That has nothing to do with being fair or even or moderate or bipartisan. But they're all used as if they mean the same thing.

Journalism Education

When I first heard there were schools of journalism in America, I did think it was a joke.... Its presence in America must have to do with the great hope for fairness, objectivity and all the other things I've come here to ridicule.... I went to talk at one once. I went to the Ernie Pyle School in Indiana. Great man. No one ever trained him.

I don't know of any good journalist who's been to a journalism school. Certainly none of the people I've mentioned, from Mark Twain to Thomas Paine to H.

L. Mencken, would have had anything like the concept of it. The thing that you need...is
a clear command of English and
basically to be made to
reread George

*[Polls] are a matter
not of measurement,
but of manipulation.*

Orwell
a lot—that,
and a certain rat-
like cunning....

Objectivity and Journalism Education

How many times do you see Ronald Reagan described as a great communicator in a news story?... Quite a lot of times, right? News stories are supposed to be non-judgmental. You don't make any but objective determinations. Facts, please, and only facts. But "great communicator" was in the news....

How many times did you see the sentence, "Ronald Reagan is liar" in a news story? Never.

Now one statement is factually verifiable—the latter one. [It] is objectively true, can be said without fear of contradiction and would pass muster in any fact-checking department on earth. The second is a statement of opinion.

If you understand why one would be in a news story and the other not, you've mastered the ideology of objectivity.... Journalism schools are teaching people to read through and pass that kind of thing. ❖

Call for Judges

1997 AEJMC Convention, Chicago.

The Qualitative Studies division needs reviewers for the 1997 AEJMC convention research competition.

Reviewers will receive approximately 4 papers after the division's April 1 deadline and will have about three weeks to evaluate them.

If you are willing to serve as a reviewer, contact Ana C. Garner, Department of Journalism, Marquette University, P.O. Box 1881, Milwaukee, WI 53201-1881, (414), 288-7383, e-mail: Garnera@vms.csd.mu.edu. Be sure to include specific areas of interest. ❖

The Future of QS as “QS”

ANA GARNER, MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY

As we contemplate the future, let us revisit a session held at the last AEJMC convention in Anaheim. Entitled “The Past, Present, and Future of Qualitative Studies,” the session featured Ted Glasser (Stanford), Bill Solomon (Rutgers), Jack Lule (Lehigh) and Bonnie Brennen (Virginia Commonwealth). The brief summary below will not simplify the many points made, but it should help think about who we are and what the division should be about.

When the division first organized, it was motivated by intellectual concerns but also by the sense that, for some, there was no place for them or their work in AEJMC. The division title was almost a default, according to Glasser. The aim was to persuade other divisions to open their doors to this kind of work, then for the division to “self-destruct.”

Today, many believe we still a need an

alternative menu. But we need to ask: An alternative to what? To what extent are we driven politically? Methodologically? Intellectually? To what extent are these three areas not mutually exclusive? To what extent do we have a common identity?

We also need to reflect on the “three C’s: culture, criticism and community,” said Lule. “‘Culture’ captures what it is we study: the producers, the products and the production. ‘Criticism’ captures how we study; often taking a more critical approach, focusing on the political, the economic, and the social implications of culture.” Through community, “we form relationships and friendships within QS that help us make sense of, or make sense in, this larger organization.” Lule noted one missing letter: Q. Defining qualitative studies in terms of “qualitative” creates a “negative definition, that being we are what we are not and that is quantitative.” Lule suggested incorporating two C’s, Cultural and Critical, into a

new name. The reason would be community. It would also shift the emphasis away from method and towards theory.

Our understanding is theoretically driven, said Brennen. “We are about understanding a culture of criticism, of critique. We question fundamental conditions in society. ‘How come?’ ‘What does it mean?’ Not simply ‘How many?’” We should not exclude anyone who uses a different qualitative methodology but in a sense “exclude those who don’t take a theoretical perspective with a big T, which is more philosophical.”

Our identity, noted Solomon, has been a “haven from number crunching.” We are also eclectic as is evident by the array of papers at our sessions. Diversity of methodological and theoretical approaches also presents an ongoing challenge of maintaining quality and focus while at the same time allowing this diversity to prosper.

Good thinking—let us hear from you. ❖