

Dr. Gabriel Ondetti

**Judith Enyeart Reynolds College of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities Research
Symposium**

Time and Date of Talk: January 25, 12:15-1:15 PM, TBD

Title of Talk:

Threats to Private Property and the Development of Tax Systems in Latin America

Speaker Biography:

Gabriel Ondetti is the Clif and Gail Smart Professor of Political Science and director of the Master of International Affairs program at Missouri State. He is a specialist on Latin American politics. Dr. Ondetti's research on Latin America has focused mainly on land reform, fiscal policy, and social movements. He has conducted field research in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, and Mexico. He is the author of two books and numerous peer-reviewed articles and book chapters. His most recent book, *Property Threats and the Politics of Anti-Statism*, was published by Cambridge University Press in 2021 and was awarded the best book award by the Political Economy section of the Latin American Studies Association.

Abstract of Talk (150-250 words):

Tax revenues have risen robustly across Latin America in recent decades, casting doubt on the region's longstanding reputation for having states too poor to finance economic and social development. However, dramatic differences persist in the magnitude of national tax burdens, even among seemingly similar countries. Based on my book *Property Threats and the Politics of Anti-Statism: The Historical Roots of Contemporary Tax Systems in Latin America*, this talk will examine the causes of these differences. It will emphasize the lasting impact of historical episodes of redistributive reform that threatened private property rights. Ironically, where such episodes were most extensive, they hindered future taxation by prompting economic elites and social conservatives to mobilize politically against state intervention in the economy, forming business associations, rightwing parties, and pro-market think tanks. Bound together by a common ideology and collective identity, these antistatist actors have proven to be remarkably enduring and effective in limiting the growth of tax revenues. In contrast, where property threats have been milder, antistatist political coalitions have remained relatively weak and taxation has eventually reached a higher level. The talk will develop this argument theoretically and illustrate it with reference to Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Mexico. It will close with a brief discussion of how I am currently extending this project to further explore the determinants and implications of public sector size in Latin America.

Interdisciplinarity:

Taxation is a topic that is intuitively important and has been studied from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. My talk will not deal with the technical minutiae of taxation, but rather with broader questions, like ideology, identity, and power, whose significance cuts across disciplinary boundaries.