

Neal Riemer

Neal Riemer was Andrew V. Stout Professor of Political Philosophy at Drew University, where he taught from 1972-1992. A prolific scholar, Riemer earned his M.A. and Ph.D. from Harvard University, held many prestigious academic posts, and left an extensive body of work in the areas of politics, human rights, and religion. He died in 2001.

Neal Riemer was born on August 25, 1922. He married Ruby on September 15, 1946 with whom he had three sons, David, Jeremiah, and Seth. In 1943, he received his Bachelor of Arts degree from Clark University, graduating first in his class and with High Honor, and with Honors in History and International Relations. He served as a Sergeant in the United States Army Air Corps from 1943 to 1945 which he claimed reinforced his "youthful commitment to a brave new world." He performed mainly administrative work but also helped edit a yearbook, worked on an army base newspaper, and taught fellow GIs. Upon completing his service he chose to continue his education at Harvard, where he obtained a Master of Arts in 1945 and Ph.D. in Government in 1947. While at Harvard, he prepared to work in the field of American Politics and American Political Thought, eventually focusing on labor legislation and the legislative process. He worked with Arthur Holcombe, Charles McIlwain, Benjamin Wright, Merle Fainsod, Carl Friedrich, John Dunlop, Samuel Eliot Morison, Arthur Schlesinger, and Louis Hartz, whom he claimed was the most stimulating teacher he had at Harvard. His dissertation was titled "Labor Legislation and the Legislative Process: The Formation of the Taft-Hartley Act."

Riemer's teaching career spanned over 50 years. He taught at Harvard from 1947-1948, and in the fall of 1948, Riemer began a 16 year career at Pennsylvania State University, where he taught American Government and political theory. He was a Visiting Professor at Cornell University, a Fulbright Professor of American Studies at the University of Innsbruck in Austria, a Guest Scholar at Carroll College, Visiting Scholar at Alverno College, and Visiting Professor at the University of South Carolina. From 1964-1972 he taught at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and also served as Associate Dean, College of Letters and Science from 1969-1971. In 1972 he began his long and distinguished career at Drew University, first as the Andrew W. Mellon Professor of Political Philosophy then as the Andrew V. Stout Professor of Political Philosophy. He taught courses on topics such as political science, political theory, prophetic politics, genocide, fascism, and Karl Marx.

Beyond his teaching career, Riemer was a prolific author. His first book, *Problems of American Government*, was published in 1952. He followed it with *World Affairs: Problems and Prospects* (1958), *The Revival of Democratic Theory* (1962), *The Representative: Trustee? Delegate? Partisan? Politico?* (editor, 1967), *James Madison* (1968), *The Democratic Experiment* (1967), *The Future of the Democratic Revolution: Toward a More Prophetic Politics* (1983), *James Madison: Creating the American Constitution* (revision of *James Madison*, 1986), *Karl Marx and Prophetic Politics* (1987), *New Thinking and Developments in International Politics: Opportunities and Dangers* (editor and co-author, 1991), *Let Justice Roll: Prophetic Challenges in Religion, Politics, and Society* (editor and co-author, 1996), *Creative Breakthroughs in Politics* (1996), and *Protection Against Genocide: Mission Impossible?* (2000). He was the general editor of the "Problems in Political Science Series" which included nine books from 1967-1972. His lasting contribution is *The Challenge of Politics: An Introduction to Political Science* which is a standard college political science textbook. The first version, *Political Science: An Introduction to Politics* was published in 1983 and in 1991 it evolved through three editions *The New World of Politics: An Introduction to Political Science* co-edited with Douglas Simon, then became *The Challenge of Politics* co-edited with Douglas Simon and Joseph Romance.

In addition to the long list of books, Riemer wrote numerous articles, chapters of books, essays, and conference papers covering topics including genocide, James Madison, liberalism, Jewish voters, Reinhold Niebuhr, political theory, the constitution, Karl Marx, Roger Williams, George Orwell, political health, prophetic politics, utopia, Watergate, Judaism, and Woodrow Wilson. These works are found in books including *Confronting the Holocaust: A Mandate for the 21st Century – Part Two*, *Encyclopedia of Politics and Religion*, *The Political Theory of the Constitution*, *Constitutionalism: The Israeli and American Experiences*, and *Religion, Public Life, and the American Polity*; journals such as *New Athanaeum*, *Journal of Political Science*, *Correlatives*, *Politics in Perspective: Teaching Political Science*, *International Interactions*, *Journal of Political Inquiry*, *Humanities and Society*, *International Review of History and Political Science*, and *Drew Gateway*. He presented at numerous conferences including American Political Science Association, Conference for the Study of Political Thought, Conference on Foreign Policy for a World Order Perspective, and Conference on Utopian Studies. Beginning in 1949, he also wrote book reviews for authors such as Alan M. Dershowitz and Paul Tillich.

Riemer made many contributions throughout his career, especially during his long tenure at Drew University. William Rogers, a former student of his at Drew University described him as "the kindest, gentlest, most compassionate soul I have ever met" and that "every class was a primer on how to be a better teacher; he demonstrated vividly that the life of the mind need not be boring or pedantic, and that we are never, ever too old to be open to new ways of seeing the world." He taught in both the undergraduate and graduate schools, gave talks on campus to students and faculty, and helped plan graduate school colloquia and conferences. In addition to teaching at academic institutions, Riemer also taught and lectured at local churches, synagogues, and taught classes in adult education.

In 2001, Riemer passed away after a struggle with cancer. To honor his memory, in 2002, his family and friends established the "[Neal Riemer Prize in Democratic Political Theory](#)" in the Caspersen School of Graduate studies to be awarded every year for a completed doctoral dissertation, master's thesis, or exception seminar paper relevant to the work of Neal Riemer.

Courtesy of the Drew University Archives