Introduction: how to use this book

The process of getting published in a peer-reviewed academic journal in political science or international relations can appear mysterious to scholars who are relatively new to the “publishing game.” More seasoned scholars have often learnt about the process through trial and error, with occasional advice, and much frustration along the way. Although there is no foolproof strategy for getting your work published on the first try, understanding the publishing process should make navigating it less frustrating. The better you understand the publishing process, the more efficiently you can target your manuscript to journals at which it will have relatively good odds. It also allows you to better navigate communications with editorial offices, as well as develop a strategy for overcoming the disappointment associated with the inevitable rejection letters. Given the increasing pressure on emerging and early career scholars to publish – not only to advance their careers but also to land a first academic position – it has also become more important than ever to learn to navigate the publishing process as efficiently as possible. This book endeavors to make it easier for emerging and early career scholars to make a successful start in navigating the publishing game.

The above implies that journal articles have become the standard format for sharing the results of research in political science and international relations. Indeed, journal articles have attained an increasingly central position in academic publishing. Many universities are keen to have faculty publish articles in academic journals. Career advancement often depends in good measure on the ability to do so. Although journal articles have in many ways become the “gold standard” of publishing, books continue to be valued as well. However, it is now more common to publish journal articles in the earlier stages of one’s academic career and produce books only at a later stage – usually in addition to, rather than as a replacement for, continued journal article publication.

To facilitate success in journal article publishing, this book endeavors to answer the many questions that emerging and early career scholars have about the journal publishing process. Some of these questions are likely to be practical ones. Others will pertain to bigger and broader
questions, such as the question suggested by this book’s title: *How do you get published in the best political science journals?* That question is not so easy to answer, as it requires consideration of the fit between the manuscript and the journal, as well as the audience you seek to reach with your work. We address both this larger question about the publishing game and more practical matters. Our goal is to demystify the process of publishing in peer-reviewed academic journals. We discuss what happens “behind the veil” at the editorial offices of journals, because we believe that a better understanding of what editors do will help emerging and early career scholars increase their likelihood of success in publishing journal articles.

There is surprisingly little guidance on the academic journal publishing process in political science and international relations, although there are many excellent books on writing and research (e.g., Powner 2015; Roselle and Spray 2016; Goodson 2017; Belcher 2019). Such books have an important part to play in your publishing success. They are indispensable for improving your writing and research skills. This book is not intended to replace such guidance. Instead, this book serves as a complement: we are convinced that it is easier to become successful in the publishing game if you also understand how the publishing process works. This book offers insight into that process.

What you find in these pages is based on our experiences with the journal publishing process as both scholars and editors. As scholars, we have experience publishing our own work. As editors, we have built expertise serving in multiple editorial roles for different types of journals. Our experience includes most recently the editorship of the *American Political Science Review*. John Ishiyama served as editor-in-chief, while Marijke Breuning served as an editor during the same time period (2012–16). In 2005, John Ishiyama became the founder and inaugural editor of the *Journal of Political Science Education* (JPSE). Marijke Breuning served as an editor of JPSE as well and we both remained editors of JPSE until 2012. Marijke Breuning further served on the inaugural editorial team of *Foreign Policy Analysis* (2005–09). Our first experience with editorship was as the joint book reviewer editors for *International Politics* (2000–03). In addition, we have both served on a number of editorial boards, reviewed numerous manuscripts, mentored many students and junior colleagues, and dispensed advice on “how to publish” in a variety of professional settings.

This book grew out of the realization that the advice we were able to provide in these various settings could only reach those who were able to
attend – and the scholars attending such sessions often had many more questions than there was time to discuss. Therefore, we sought a way to broaden access to information about the publishing process and provide a resource that can be consulted as questions arise. The book serves in part as a “how to” manual that outlines step-by-step the various aspects of the publishing process, but we also address several issues of increasing importance in political science and international relations. We address the latter because publishing success is also dependent on understanding these issues. Where we can, we provide clear advice. However, in many instances, determining the best decision requires carefully taking into account the relevant circumstances. In such cases, we discuss the issues to consider and the currently acceptable practices. Where we cannot offer a simple recipe, we invite you to engage thoughtfully with difficult questions and tradeoffs.

WHAT YOU WILL FIND IN THIS BOOK

In Chapter 1, we provide a basic overview of the publishing process, discuss how to decide where to submit your work, when to submit it, and the value of a good abstract. Further, we discuss strategies for sustained productivity and guidance regarding co-authorship. This chapter lays the foundation for the remainder of the book.

Chapter 2 discusses what happens in the editorial office. We discuss the initial editorial screening, the review process and the decision process. These aspects of the publishing process are often shrouded in mystery, and misconceptions abound. Explaining these aspects of the process helps to understand why the review process takes time and why the outcome can be somewhat unpredictable. We provide some guidance as to when to contact an editor if the process seems to take unusually long. We also discuss the process of revising your manuscript, both in response to an invitation to revise and resubmit, as well as after a rejection. The chapter further describes the process that follows after your paper has been accepted.

Chapter 3 moves on to a discussion of ethics and integrity in publishing. Although important, most scholars in political science and international relations receive little training in these important aspects of research and journal publishing. The chapter includes a discussion of different forms of plagiarism as well as ethics surrounding human subjects research.

We follow this in Chapter 4 with a discussion of research transparency. This is an increasingly important subject in academic publishing. The
chapter addresses it both regarding qualitative and quantitative scholarship in the discipline. It also discusses the difference between reproducibility and replication.

In Chapter 5 we discuss newer developments in academic publishing and focus especially on open access publishing. The publishing model that is most familiar in political science is one where publishing houses charge the end-user, i.e., the library or the individual who subscribes to the journal. Authors do not incur any costs. An emerging new publishing model is one in which the end-user has open access to the content of the journal and the publisher collects an article processing fee from the author. This model is used by some credible academic publishers, but also by predatory journals. The latter prey upon unsuspecting scholars and charge them to publish, usually after a very questionable or non-existent review process. Such publishing harms a scholar’s academic reputation far more than enhancing it. We therefore think it is important to learn to distinguish such outlets from credible academic publishing opportunities.

We close the book with Chapter 6, which discusses some ways in which you can maximize the impact of your scholarship, the value of serving as a reviewer for academic journals, and maintaining consistent scholarly productivity over time.

Several chapters contain boxes that summarize information for quick review, or provide checklists or links to additional resources. We hope that these features make the book useful not only to learn about the publishing process but also as a quick reference guide to consult as you work to get published in the best political science journals.