

OSTROM WORKSHOP COLLOQUIUM SERIES

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“Secrets in Global Governance:
A Theory of Sensitive Information,
Disclosure Dilemmas, and International
Cooperation”



Monday, NOVEMBER 26, 2018

12:00–1:00 PM • Ostrom Workshop, 513 N. Park

How do international organizations (IOs) help states cooperate? This book will introduce a distinct information problem that hinders efforts to solve shared problems, and describes how IOs with unique secrecy functions can address them. We argue that states often possess unique information about other countries' violations of international rules. Without an institutional solution, states react to dilemmas of disclosing such details by keeping it private. As a result, commercially sensitive economic information and national intelligence often do not serve as inputs into questions of compliance. Yet IOs equipped with “confidentiality systems”—secrecy by another name—can analyze and act on such sensitive information, while preventing the harm that would come from wider release. I will present the theory chapter from this book project. The larger book assesses the theory in chapters on nuclear proliferation, international trade, tribunals for war criminals, and disputes about foreign direct investment.



[Austin Carson](#) is an assistant professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Chicago. His first book, *Secret Wars: Covert Conflict in International Politics* (Princeton UP 2018), analyzes puzzling secrecy patterns that arise when outside powers intervene in foreign wars. The book develops a theory based on conflict escalation dynamics, showing that states use covert intervention and conceal others' covert activity to keep war limited. His second book project, in collaboration with Allison Carnegie (Columbia), analyzes the role of intelligence and other forms of sensitive information in international organizations. He received his PhD from Ohio State in 2013.

Presentations are open to the public and are live streamed (see our website for URL and papers). You are welcome to bring your lunch. For questions, contact Allison Sturgeon (sturgeon@iu.edu; 812/855–3151).