Call for Chapter Proposals: Deadline 1 June 2025

Working title: *Secrecy Studies: Enduring Themes, New Directions*

Contributions to an edited volume

As we bear witness to the emergence of a new era of 'polycrisis', secrecy, and the perception of secrecy, looms large once again in public conversations. Amongst these concerns are the interconnected developments associated with fears and distrust of a growing 'secret state' (including associated with the expansion of covert operation, intelligence gathering, and surveillance powers or even fears of an ideological 'deep state'); the mainstreaming of claims and counterclaims of misinformation, disinformation, and conspiracy theories; the rise of authoritarianism with attendant centralisations of power and knowledge; the emergence of shadow finance, 'fintech' and other secretive economic practices; increasing suspicions, censorship and memory politics associated with a new phase of 'culture wars'; rising distrust in international institutions, especially in global health and climate expertise; and the mounting forms of resistance to this rise in (il)liberal and reactionary politics that necessitates 'working in the shadows'.

To date, however, the secrecy dimensions of this 'polycrisis', alongside the longer histories of secrecy more generally, remain under-examined. Secrecy, or rather secrec*ies*, has made and transformed the world in ways that have been radically underappreciated, minimised, overlooked and even consciously erased. Understanding the salience and multiplicities of secrecies in social and political orders is more important than ever.

More specifically, this volume contends that work within and beyond Secrecy Studies deserves fresh attention. We suggest a (re)turn to secrecy as a core object of study - whether state-centric approaches (e.g., concerned with 'internal' politics and 'democratic balance' or 'external' problems associated with the (mis)use of secrecy internationally), approaches that conceptualises secrecy as a 'tool' used intentionally and consciously by individuals, groups, and states to exert power over others; or work that conceives of secrecy (and the power of secrecy) in non-binary ways, considers longer histories, diverse sets of practices and forms, and with attention to structures of power, including the role of wilful ignorance and cultural amnesia for example.

This edited collection therefore brings together, for the first time, contributions from scholars who examine how secrecies (including associated forms of denial, ignorance and 'unknowing') have shaped the world around us from the everyday to the planetary,

and in the mundane as well as exceptional. *Secrecy Studies* will demonstrate how secrecies are far more pervasive and diverse both historically and today than conventionally understood. It will explore how lives and orders – everyday and exceptional – are shaped by secrecy, and how secrecy is itself subject to change and challenge. In other words, secrecies are shaped by and shape identities, social relations, cultures, memories, economies, geographies, political institutions, security landscapes, and futures. In short, this conceptual and empirical terrain is still to be fully mapped, historically and in the present. Doing so will enable an understanding of the many-sided implications for how the world is made and remade by secrecies that are entangled within structures of power, (in)attention, identities, and violence. An examination that is more pressing than ever in this new era of 'polycrisis'.

In light of the core aims of the volume we therefore seek contributions that engage with, but are not limited to, the following:

- Histories of secrecy and/or secrecy practices;
- The governance of secrecy – whether on global, national or intimate scales;
- The relationships of 'secrecy binaries' e.g. public/private, ignorance/knowledge, trust/suspicion, open/closed, transparent/opaque, secret/revelation;
- The role of secrecies in structuring international order and disorder;
- The function of secrecies in truth, justice and accountability-seeking;
- Political economy of secrecy;
- The 'allure' of secrecy;
- Crime, violence, harm and/or scandal in relation to secrecy;
- Secrecy as resistance and/or disruption;
- The 'infrastructures' and materialities of secrecies;
- Secrecy and memory, memorialisation, and/or forgetting;
- Surveillance and other police powers in relation to secrecy;
- Explorations of the multi-modal forms of secrecy (e.g. visual, aural, linguistic, spatial);
- The creation of fictional worlds and cultures where secrecy is co-produced;
- Analysis of conspiracy theories that focus on secrecy;
- The consideration of structures of power (gender, race, sexuality, class, ability) in relation to secrecy through, for example 'wilful ignorance'; and/or
- Methodological considerations and challenges in researching secrecy.

We welcome chapter proposals from across disciplines and from across the world, written in English, as well as contributions from those looking to contribute visual essays. We also welcome contributions from scholars at any career stage, including PhD researchers.

Moreover, this volume will sit alongside a companion volume, *The A-Z of Secrecy and Ignorance*: *An Encyclopaedia of Key Concepts, Terms, and Tropes*. Prospective authors are very welcome to consider submitting proposals for companion pieces (entries will

be approximately 1,000 words each) alongside their chapter proposals submitted for this volume. See the accompanying SPIN *A-Z Call for Entries*.

To propose a chapter contribution to the edited volume, please submit the following to secrecyresearch@gmail.com by Sunday 1 June 2025:

- A provisional title and chapter abstract of no more than 250 words
- A brief bio for each author
- 3-5 suggested keywords for your chapter
- And, if interested, indicate whether an A-Z entry will also be proposed and the concept/term under consideration.

Submissions will then be worked into a proposal for an edited collection for Oxford University Press, in the first instance. Once a book contract is in place, contributors will be invited to an online meeting in October 2025 to learn more about the shape of the volume overall and the publication timeline.

For further information, please contact secrecyresearch@gmail.com and/or the editorial team:

Dr. Elspeth Van Veeren, School of Sociology, Politics and International Studies, University of Bristol, e.vanveeren@bristol.ac.uk

Professor Brian Rappert, Professor of Science, Technology and Public Affairs, Social and Political Sciences, Philosophy, and Anthropology, University of Exeter, B.Rappert@exeter.ac.uk

Dr. Clare Stevens, Lecturer in International Relations, School of Law and Politics, Cardiff University, StevensC15@cardiff.ac.uk

Dr. Owen D. Thomas, Associate Professor in Politics and International Relations. Social and Political Sciences, Philosophy, and Anthropology, University of Exeter, O.D.Thomas@exeter.ac.uk