

SUSAN J. PHARR

IUC '71

Susan Pharr became interested in Japan through martial arts. As a first-year graduate student at Columbia University, she enrolled in a judo class for both recreation and self-defense training and found herself among a group of fellow students made up almost entirely of Japanese black belts. Her interactions with them and pursuant outings for sushi eventually led to courses in Japanese society and politics with James William Morley, Herbert Passin, and later, Gerald Curtis. She found the study of Meiji Japan riveting, and eventually made Japan the center of her doctoral work in comparative politics.



Her research has explored the social basis for democracy in Japan and includes topics such as comparative political behavior, comparative politics of industrialized nations, democratization and political development in Japan and Asia, civil society and nonprofit organizations, political ethics and corruption, environmental politics, the role of media in politics, U.S.-Japan relations, Japanese politics, and international relations in East Asia. Her current research focuses on the changing nature

Pharr was born in Atlanta, Georgia and received her B.A. with high honors from Emory University in 1966. She received her M.A. (1970) and Ph.D. (1975) in political science from Columbia. She graduated from the IUC in 1971. She became an Assistant Professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1977, then an Associate Professor in 1980. Pharr joined the Harvard faculty in 1987.

She is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and has been a Fellow or Visiting Research Scholar at the Brookings Institution, the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, the East West Center, University of Tokyo, Sophia University and Keio University.

of relations between citizens and states in Asia, and the forces that shape civil society over time.

In 2008, Pharr received the Order of the Rising Sun medal from the Japanese government in recognition of the extent to which she has “contributed to promoting intellectual exchange between Japan and the United States of America, and to guiding and nurturing young Japanologists.” Today, Pharr is the Edwin O. Reischauer Professor of Japanese Politics in the Department of Government, and the director of the Program on U.S.-Japan Relations of the Weatherhead Center of International Affairs at Harvard University.