





The late Professor Mancur Olson is widely regarded as one of the most influential political economists of the late 20th century. He came to the University of Maryland in 1967, and served as a Distinguished University Professor until his death in 1998.

Professor Olson's best-known works, "The Logic of Collective Action" and "The Rise and Decline of Nations," have each been translated into 10 languages.

Many of Professor Olson's students, colleagues, family and friends were pleased to honor his legacy with the establishment of UMD's Mancur Olson Professorship, which is currently

held by Professor John Wallis. The inaugural holder of the chair was Professor Peter Murrell.

"He was enormous fun to be around, talking about economics and arguing over some observation or some theory. He was a person who lived life to the fullest. He made sure that the people around him could partake in those pleasures of analysis that he could apply everywhere, even in the remotest corners of human life," Professor Murrell said of his friend and colleague, Mancur Olson. "We will have Mancur's theories and published works forever. What we miss now are Mancur's deep optimism that our dismal science can produce ideas for the common good and his enormous energy in applying those ideas."

As further proof of the lasting respect he garnered in his field, Professor Olson is also remembered by the American Political Science Association, which gives an Olson Award annually for the best Ph.D. dissertation in Political Economy.

"The field of economics was forever changed by Professor Olson's work, and his ties to our university and our department make us exceptionally grateful and proud," said Professor Judith Hellerstein, chair of the Department of Economics.

Born in 1932, Professor Olson's hometown was Buxton, North Dakota. He has Scandinavian heritage—all four of his grandparents immigrated from Norway. Professor Olson graduated from North Dakota State University, and was a Rhodes Scholar at University College, Oxford before he earned a Ph.D. in economics from Harvard in 1963.

Professor Olson, his infant son, his parents, two grandparents and other family members are buried at Grue Lutheran Church northeast of Buxton, North Dakota.



Professor Olson's admirers from across the United States are now taking action to recognize his life, legacy, and heritage through several notable awards and honors, including:

Nominating Professor Olson for North Dakota's [Theodore Roosevelt Rough Rider Award](#); Nominating Professor Olson for the [Scandinavian-American Hall of Fame](#); and Nominating Professor Olson's gravesite for a [North Dakota Historical Marker](#).

"Professor Olson still has family in North Dakota, and I believe that many people in North Dakota who are not aware of his contributions would be proud of his ties to our state, if they knew," said Sally Hoffman,

a history enthusiast who is organizing these efforts. "I have been in touch with Professor Olson's wife, who replied with gratitude. It would be so wonderful for her to see her husband honored by his home state."

For the bronze historical marker effort, Hoffman noted that whichever group or organization sponsors the marker, will have its name affixed thereupon in perpetuity.

Hoffman and her collaborators welcome the participation of the UMD and Department of Economics communities in these efforts. To learn more, please contact Hoffman at SCH.608@gmail.com.

Illustration of Mancur Olson by [Andrew Stark](#), used with permission of the artist.