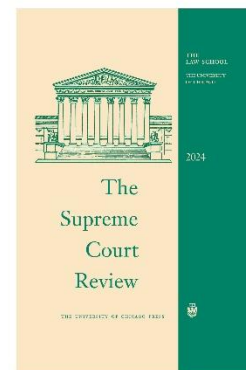
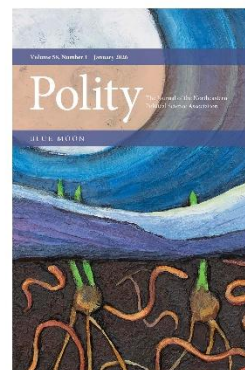
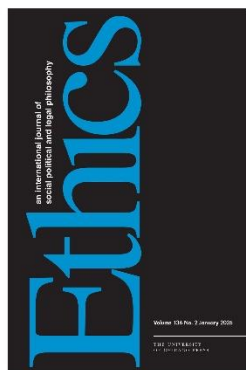
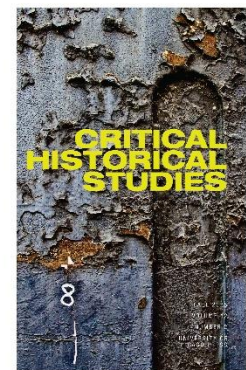
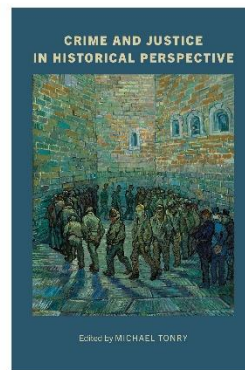
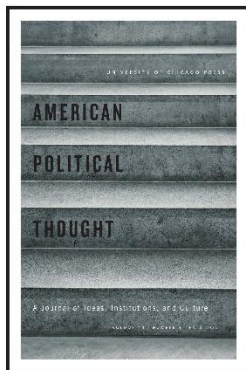




New England Political Science Association

**2026 ANNUAL MEETING
DOUBLETREE BY HILTON
BURLINGTON, VERMONT
APRIL 23-25, 2026**

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LUNCHEON PROGRAMMING

Friday, April 24



GARRETT GRAFF

Bestselling historian and Pulitzer Prize finalist

Author, The Devil Reached Toward the Sky: An Oral History of the Making and Unleashing of the Atomic Bomb

Bestselling author and Pulitzer Prize finalist historian Garrett M. Graff has covered politics, technology, and national security for two decades. The former editor of *POLITICO* Magazine and longtime WIRED and CNN contributor, he has written for publications ranging from *The New Yorker*, *Esquire*, and *Rolling Stone* to *Vanity Fair*, *Bloomberg BusinessWeek*, and *Mother Jones*. Today, he writes the popular “Doomsday Scenario” newsletter and hosts the Edward R. Murrow Award-winning podcast, “Long Shadow,” among other work.

He is the author of ten books, including Watergate: A New History, and is best known for his three landmark volumes of oral history, all *New York Times* bestsellers: The Only Plane in the Sky: An Oral History of 9/11, When the Sea Came Alive: An Oral History of D-Day, and, most recently, The Devil Reached Toward the Sky, about the making of the atomic bomb.

Saturday, April 25



The Honorable

MYRNA PÉREZ

**United States Circuit Court Judge,
Second Circuit Court of Appeals**

Myrna Pérez was sworn in as a United States Circuit Court Judge for the Second Circuit in November 2021. From 2006 until her appointment, Judge Pérez served in various roles at the Brennan Center for Justice at the New York University (NYU) School of Law, most recently as the Director of their Voting Rights and Elections Program. She has been a lecturer-in-law at Columbia Law School since 2016, where she teaches a seminar on election law, and she previously served as an Adjunct Professor of Clinical Law at NYU School of Law from 2013 to 2015. Prior to joining the Brennan Center, Judge Pérez was a Civil Rights Litigation Fellow at Relman, Dane & Colfax, a civil rights law firm in Washington, D.C., from 2005 to 2006.

Among other awards and honors, she was awarded the Latina Lawyer of the Year Award by the Hispanic National Bar Association in 2021, the Breaking the Glass Ceiling Award by the Leadership Institute for Women of Color attorneys in 2021, the Excellence in Academia Award by the Puerto Rican Bar Association in 2011, the Robert F. Kennedy Award for Excellence in Public Service by the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University in 1998, and was named one of “50 Hispanic Influentials” by Hispanic Business in 2014.

**new england
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**2026 ANNUAL MEETING
DOUBLETREE BY HILTON, BURLINGTON, VERMONT
APRIL 23-25, 2026**

NEW ENGLAND POLITICAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION OFFICERS, 2025-2026



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Herschel Nachlis, Dartmouth College (2024-2026)
Erin O'Brien, University of Massachusetts-Boston (2025-2027)

2026 SECTION CHAIRS

AMERICAN POLITICS: Jonathan Bradley, University of Vermont
COMPARATIVE AND CANADIAN POLITICS: Simon Vodrey, Carleton University
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: Daniela Melo, Boston University
POLITICAL THEORY: Wendy Wright, William Paterson University
POLITICS AND HISTORY: Ryan LaRochelle, University of Maine
PUBLIC LAW: Michael Catalano, University of Scranton
PUBLIC POLICY: Nicholas Kapoor, Fairfield University
RACE GENDER AND INTERSECTIONALITY: Libby Sharrow, University of Massachusetts – Amherst
TECHNOLOGY AND POLITICS: Jonathan Wharton, Southern Connecticut State University

2026 UNDERGRADUATE REVIEW COMMITTEE

Amy Fried, University of Maine
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<http://www.newenglandpsa.org>

NEPSA 2026 PROGRAM OVERVIEW

THURSDAY, APRIL 23

REGISTRATION	5:00 PM to 8:00 PM	Presidential Foyer
WELCOME EVENT	5:30 PM to 7:00 PM	Lake Champlain Chocolates *
BOARD MEETING / DINNER	7:30 PM to 9:30 PM	Kingsland
A/V PROJECTOR DEMO	10:00 PM to 10:15 PM	Emerald Ballroom Foyer**

FRIDAY, APRIL 24

REGISTRATION	7:30 AM to 5:00 PM	Diamond Ballroom Foyer
BOOK EXHIBITS	7:30 AM to 5:00 PM	Diamond Ballroom Foyer
CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST	7:30 PM to 8:30 PM	Diamond Ballroom Foyer
SESSION ONE PANELS	8:30 AM to 10:00 AM	various
MORNING BREAK	10:00 AM to 11:00 AM	Diamond Ballroom Foyer
SESSION TWO PANELS	10:15 AM to 11:45 AM	various
LUNCHEON	12:00 PM to 1:45 PM	Lake Champlain Exhibition Hall
SESSION THREE PANELS	2:00 PM to 3:30 PM	various
AFTERNOON BREAK	3:30 PM to 4:30 PM	Diamond Ballroom Foyer
SESSION FOUR PANELS	3:45 PM to 5:15 PM	various
COCKTAIL RECEPTION	5:30 PM to 6:30 PM	Atrium

SATURDAY, APRIL 25

REGISTRATION	7:30 AM to 3:45 PM	Diamond Ballroom Foyer
BOOK EXHIBITS	7:30 AM to 5:00 PM	Diamond Ballroom Foyer
CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST	7:30 AM to 8:30 AM	Diamond Ballroom Foyer
SESSION FIVE PANELS	8:30 AM to 10:00 AM	various
MORNING BREAK	10:00 AM to 11:00 AM	Diamond Ballroom Foyer
SESSION SIX PANELS	10:15 AM to 11:45 AM	various
LUNCHEON	12:00 PM to 1:45 PM	Lake Champlain Exhibition Hall
SESSION SEVEN PANELS	2:00 PM to 3:30 PM	various
AFTERNOON BREAK	3:30 PM to 4:30 PM	Diamond Ballroom Foyer
SESSION EIGHT PANELS	3:45 PM to 5:15 PM	various

* The welcome event for the 2026 Annual Meeting is a private guided chocolate tasting, at Lake Champlain Chocolates' flagship store, 750 Pine Street. The event is ticketed in advance. If you are attending the event, you can either make your own way to the store, or arrange a ride on the hotel shuttle.



** The projector demo is an optional session for anyone who wants to get a preview of how to hook up a laptop to the NEPSA projectors. This is an especially useful session for panel chairs with presenters planning on using PowerPoint, but anyone can attend. If you wish to attend, please go to the Emerald Ballroom Foyer to be directed to the breakout room where the demo will take place.



THE 2026 ANNUAL MEETING

1-A (EMERALD1): US Foreign Policy

sponsored by the American Politics section

Patrick Homan, Dominican University

Tobias T. Gibson, Westminster College (MO)

Biden, Congress, and the Battle Over Supporting Ukraine

Joseph Peschek, Hamline University

Trump 2.0: Is There a Trump Doctrine in Foreign Policy?

Shyam Sriram, Canisius University

"White Light/ White Heat: South African Immigrants Assess the Arrival of Afrikaner Refugees"

Samantha Taylor, Johns Hopkins University

Post Cold War American Liberal Internationalism and US Policy Decision-Making

PANEL CHAIR: Alexandre Couture Gagnon, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

DISCUSSANT: MJ Peterson, University of Massachusetts Amherst

1-B (EMERALD 2): Alliances and International Regimes in Changing Global Contexts

sponsored by the International Relations section

Cora Caton, University of Maine

Economic Anxiety without Coalitions: Artificial Intelligence and Distributional Politics

Hyunsup Ko, Syracuse University

Alliance Cohesion as Deterrent Signaling: Evidence from U.S.–ROK Policy Alignment and North Korean Provocations

PANEL CHAIR: Priya Moran, Friends Committee on National Legislation

DISCUSSANT: Bree Bang-Jensen, University of Georgia

1-C (EMERALD3): Judicial Selection and Identities

sponsored by the Public Law section

Dave Bridge, Baylor University

Donald Trump's 2016 List of Supreme Court Nominees

Paul Collins, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Christina Boyd, Washington University in St. Louis

Michael Strawbridge, Washington University in St. Louis

Bias and the Public's Assessment of Supreme Court Appointments

Kenneth Manning, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth

Judicial Appointments in the Second Trump Administration: A Tentative First Look

PANEL CHAIR: Wendy Martinek, Binghamton University

DISCUSSANT: Shane Gleason, Trinity College

1-D (DIAMOND1): Small States, Shared Traditions: Governing and Participating in New England

sponsored by the Public Policy section

Carolyn Arcand, University of Southern Maine

Exploring Methods used to Engage Maine Residents in Municipal Public Meetings

Stevent Cleto Garcia, University of Rhode Island

Capital Projects vs. Community Needs: Participation, Power, and Institutional Design in Rhode Island Capital Planning

Aaron Ley, University of Rhode Island

Brendan Mark, University of Rhode Island

Stakeholder Perceptions of Climate Resilience Policy Instruments in Rhode Island

David Rovinsky, United States Department of State

Smallness, Dependence, and Flow: Rethinking Vermont

PANEL CHAIR: Emily Lynch, University of Rhode Island

DISCUSSANT: Emily Lynch, University of Rhode Island

1-E (DIAMOND2): United States Demographics

sponsored by the American Politics section

Raymond LaRaja, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Ethan Walz, University of Massachusetts Amherst

The Conservative Countercurrent: Young Republican Women and the New Gender–Generational Divide

Jennifer Lucas, Saint Anselm College

Kevin Doran, Saint Anselm College

Kyla Prussman, Saint Anselm College

Elizabeth Rickenbach, Saint Anselm College

Change and Stability in Older Voters Attitudes

Tatishe Nteta, University of Massachusetts Amherst

They Not Like Us? Veterans, Hostile Sexism, and Vote Choice in American Presidential Elections

Jesse Rhodes, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Adam Eichen, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Is there a Gender Penalty in Evaluations of Aging Elected Officials? Evidence from a Survey Experiment

PANEL CHAIR: Nicholas Kapoor, Fairfield University

DISCUSSANT: Michael Kerr, University of Massachusetts School of Law - Dartmouth

1-F (KINGSLAND): Conflicts for the Ages

sponsored by the Political Theory section

Genevieve Saharov, McGill University

Mythos for Medieval Martyrs: Politics of Martyrdom in The Consolation of Philosophy

Alejandro Cuadrado, Bowdoin College

Citizens of the Divided City: Dante's Concept of Diachronic Citizenship as a Remedy for Factionalism

Maxwell Lykins, Bowdoin College

The Demos Liberation Front: Class Warfare in Aristotle's Politics 4-7

John Colman, Ave Maria University

Montaigne's Discovery of Ancient Exotericism

PANEL CHAIR: Gia Mosashvili, New York University

DISCUSSANT: Robert Downes, University of Connecticut

1-G (SHELBURNE): ROUNDTABLE: Author Meets Readers: *Pre-Existing Conditions*, by Alex Garlick
sponsored by the American Politics section

Herschel Nachlis, Dartmouth College
Katherine Rader, University at Albany, SUNY
Gary Winslett, Middlebury College
James Morone, Brown University

PANEL CHAIR: Alec Ewald, University of Vermont
DISCUSSANT: Alex Garlick, University of Vermont

1-H (VALCOUR): ROUNDTABLE: Author Meets Readers: *Born Equal*, by Akhil Reed Amar
sponsored by the Public Law section

Mark Graber, Francis King Carey School of Law, University of Maryland,
Bradley Watson, Hillsdale College,

PANEL CHAIR: David Schaefer, College of the Holy Cross,
DISCUSSANT: Akhil Amar, Yale Law School,

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Diamond Ballroom Foyer

2-A (EMERALD1): Political Communication and Media

sponsored by the American Politics section

Aliha Haider, Binghamton University, SUNY

Filtering the Facts: Partisan Identity and Resistance to Misinformation

Tristan Hightower, Bryant University

Christian Pereira, Bryant University

Divided by Truth: Legislative Consequences of Presidential Signaling on Social Media

William Mayer, Northeastern University

The Seventh American Party System: The Realignment That Nobody Noticed

Jesse Usher Barrett, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Donald Snyder, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Encounters With Law Enforcement: Utilizing Review Text as a Measurement of Police Contact

Madison Witaconis, Simmons University

Writing on the Wall: The Political & Linguistic Dimensions of Boston Graffiti

PANEL CHAIR / DISCUSSANT: Helen Knowles-Gardner, Institute for Free Speech

DISCUSSANT: Alex Garlick, University of Vermont

2-B (EMERALD2): War and Security

sponsored by the International Relations section

Patrick Bratton, United States Army War College

Imagining the Future of War: KM Panikkar's Strategic Thinking

Giuliano Espino, Framingham State University

Haley Jensen, Framingham State University

Jamie Kuenzel, Framingham State University

Kimberly Martinez, Framingham State University

Celebrity as Security Actor: Taylor Swift and the Politics of Protection

Daniel Post, United States Naval War College

Astrid Kause, Leuphana University

Moritz Keutt, University of Hamburg

Paul Slovic, University of Oregon

Sharon Weiner, American University

"Choosing to use nuclear weapons: How choice sets affect decisions in a nuclear crisis"

PANEL CHAIR: Kevin Buterbaugh, Southern Connecticut State University

DISCUSSANT: Kevin Buterbaugh, Southern Connecticut State University

2-C (EMERALD3): Comparative Law and Courts

sponsored by the Comparative and Canadian Politics section

Manuela Brunner, University at Albany, SUNY

Theodore Wilson, University at Albany, SUNY

Pre-trial incarceration and the Chilean criminal justice reform

Camila Castro, University at Albany, SUNY

Judicial Impacts of 'Operação Acolhida' (Operation Welcome): The role of Legal Decision-Making in Brazil in Humanitarian Actions

Tassiana Moura de Oliveira, University at Albany, SUNY

Environmental Injustice and Anti-Crime Governance: Are Courts Ignoring Environmental Harm in Brazil's Favelas?

Gabriel Rojas-Salazar, University at Albany, SUNY

Matthew Ingram, University at Albany, SUNY

Electing Judges: Perspectives from the Judiciary in Mexico

PANEL CHAIR: Matthew Ingram, University at Albany, SUNY

DISCUSSANT: Matthew Ingram, University at Albany, SUNY

2-D (DIAMOND1): How the State Makes Sense of Itself: Authority, Accountability, and Public Engagement

sponsored by the Public Policy section

Daniel Chand, Kent State University

Amy Xiaoyi Sun, Kent State University

Retributive Enforcement and Uncooperative Federalism: Is ICE Targeting Sanctuary Jurisdictions?

Adam Cucchiara, United States Military Academy

Beyond Body Counts: Organizational Effectiveness During Rapid Security Expansion

Mneesha Gellman, Emerson College

Janice Gallagher

CholoTech: Call Centers and Deported People in the Circular Migration of Predatory Capitalism

Hyesang Noh, University at Albany, SUNY

Who Comments and What Narratives They Tell: Voice and Power in Immigrant Welfare Rulemaking

PANEL CHAIR: Brian Fife, Lehigh University

DISCUSSANT: Brian Fife, Lehigh University

2-E (DIAMOND2): Politics on the Edge

sponsored by the Political Theory section

Jeremiah Grove, University of Illinois, Chicago

Politics in the Social Media Age: The Dominance of Pseudo-Intimacy in Contemporary Politics

Michael McKinney, Independent Scholar

The Political Security Dilemma: A Framework of Favored Values and Forgotten Virtues in the American Political System.

Shyam Sriram, Canisius University

Matthew Braden, Canisius University

"ICE Removals and the Stability of Fascism: Lessons from Agamben, Deleuze, and Guattari"

Hisham Yousif, United States Military Academy

The Narrowing of America's Epistemic Frontier

PANEL CHAIR: Priya Moran, Friends Committee on National Legislation

DISCUSSANT: Simon Vodrey, Carleton University

2-F (KINGSLAND): ROUNDTABLE: Author Meets Readers: *Neighborhoods Matter: How Place and People Affect Political Participation*, by Carrie LeVan

sponsored by the American Politics section

Sara Dayhill-Brown, Wake Forest University

Bert Johnson, Middlebury College

Lesley Lavery, Macalester College

Jonathan Wharton, Southern Connecticut State University

PANEL CHAIR: Nicholas Kapoor, Fairfield University

DISCUSSANT: Carrie LeVan, Colby College

2-G (SHELBURNE): ROUNDTABLE: President Trump's Constitution

sponsored by the Public Law section

Mark Graber, Francis King Carey School of Law, University of Maryland

Kevin McMahon, Trinity College

Carol Nackenoff, Swarthmore College

Julie Novkov, University at Albany, SUNY

Jeffrey Tulis, University of Texas

PANEL CHAIR: Carol Nackenoff, Swarthmore College

2-H (VALCOUR): Liberal Edges

sponsored by the Political Theory section

Gia Mosashvili, New York University

Utilitarianism in Crisis: Can Governments Still Provide “the Greatest Good for the Greatest Number” amid the Tragedy of the Commons?

Lucas Swaine, Dartmouth College

Spirit for Liberal Democracy

Kieran Mabey, Yale University

“the major part”: Popular Sovereignty in Hobbes's Leviathan

Stephen Goniprow, Hillsdale College

John Rawls and Global Justice Theory

PANEL CHAIR: Greg Collins, Yale University

DISCUSSANT: Callum Ingram, University of Nevada, Reno

2-I (WILLSBORO): Capital, Labor, and Administration in American History

sponsored by the Politics and History section

Ayelet Carmeli, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

The Origins of Financial Citizenship: Savings Banks, Thrift, and State-Building in Nineteenth-Century United States

James Greer, United States Department of the Treasury

Institutional Foundation of the New Deal Insurance State

Marc Eisner, Wesleyan University

Deconstructing the Regulatory State: Trump, Deregulation, and the Weaponization of Regulatory Intervention

PANEL CHAIR: Joseph Peschek, Hamline University

DISCUSSANT: Eric Miller, Independent Scholar

2-J (AMPHITHEATER): Undergraduate Panel – Comparative Control and Resistance

sponsored by the Undergraduate Research Committee

Alana Bauer, University of Vermont

Crisis of Rural Governance: A Comparative Analysis of Morocco and Senegal

Isabel Custodio, St. Edward's University

BRICS Reactions to African Conflict and the New Major Power Clash

Brigid Hughes, Saint Anselm College

NGO Strategies and Corporate Response in African Mining Sectors: A Comparative Study of NGO Reports on Cobalt in the DRC and Diamonds in Sierra Leone

Ashley Soto, University of Connecticut

More than Mask: How South Korea Leverages Private Industry to Cultivate Global power through Beauty and Culture

PANEL CHAIR: Scott McLean, Quinnipiac University

DISCUSSANT: Rachael Cobb, Suffolk University

**PLEASE JOIN US FOR LUNCH
Lake Champlain Exhibition Hall**

FEATURED PRESENTATION

**GARRETT GRAFF
bestselling historian and Pulitzer Prize finalist**

3-A (EMERALD1): Russian Foreign Policy: Between War, Energy, and Misinformation

sponsored by the International Relations section

Briana List, United States Military Academy
Robert Person, United States Military Academy
Reagan Phelps, United States Military Academy
Russian Information War in the Baltic States

Glory Okereke, Florida International University
Weaponizing Energy: States Use of Oil and Gas as Tools of Political Coercion

Antoaneta Vanc, Quinnipiac University
Costel Calin, Southern Connecticut State University
The politics of portrayal: New York Times narratives of Eastern European countries during the Ukraine war

PANEL CHAIR: Zachary Shirkey, Hunter College, CUNY
DISCUSSANT: Zachary Shirkey, Hunter College, CUNY

3-B (EMERALD2): Virtues and Values

sponsored by the Political Theory section

Liza Williams, Tufts University
Hospitality as a Movement and Practice in the Age of Global Populism

Kenneth Andrew Andres Leonardo, Hamilton College
On the Way to Virtue: A Comparison of the Pursuit of Virtue in Aristotle and Tsunetomo

Amishai Goodman-Goldstein, American University
The Decline of Civic Formation: Elite Higher Education as a Causal Driver of Polarization in 21st Century America

Natalie Pennisi, McGill University
Affective Reciprocal Vulnerability: A Sentimental Solution to Societal Precarity

PANEL CHAIR: Lucas Swaine, Dartmouth College
DISCUSSANT: Lucas Swaine, Dartmouth College

3-C (EMERALD3): Arts, Education & Humanities

sponsored by the American Politics section

Jacob Boros, Saint Vincent College

Education for Ecological Citizenship: Aldo Leopold on Reading Land

Anne Marie Cammisa, Georgetown University

Advocating for the Arts in Congress

Stefanie Chambers, Trinity College

Sara Dayhill-Brown, Wake Forest University

Lesley Lavery, Macalester College

Navigating the Politics of Scarcity: Early Findings From a Multi-Site Study of School Closure in the US

Adam Shepardson, University at Albany, SUNY

Joshua Bleiberg, University of Pittsburgh

Leslie Finger, University of North Texas

Melissa Lyon, University at Albany, SUNY

Hyesang Noh, University at Albany, SUNY

How Do Teacher Strikes Affect School Board Elections?

PANEL CHAIR: Jonathan Wharton, Southern Connecticut State University

DISCUSSANT: Jonathan Wharton, Southern Connecticut State University

3-D (DIAMOND1): Everything Old is New Again: Retrenchment, Strikes, and Labor Exploitation in American Politics

sponsored by the Politics and History section

Kiara Hernandez, Harvard University

Ryan Enos, Harvard University

The Effect of Localized Exposure to Inequality on Preferences for Redistribution: Evidence from a Large Hospital Strike

Melissa Lyon, University at Albany, SUNY

Ji Hyun Byeon, University at Albany, SUNY

Stephen Holt, University at Albany, SUNY

Lucy Sorensen, University at Albany, SUNY

When Do States Erode Protections? The Case of Contemporary Child Labor in the United States

Katherine Rader, University at Albany, SUNY

Danny Daneri, Syracuse University

Zachary Schaller, Colorado State University

"Equalizing" Labor Law? Postwar Retrenchment and The Taft-Hartley Act

Kathleen Sullivan, Ohio University

Losing through Winning: Maritime Capital and Labor in WWI

PANEL CHAIR: Susan Moffitt, Brown University

DISCUSSANT: Ashley Fox, University at Albany, SUNY

3-E (DIAMOND2): Government, Law and Technology

sponsored by the Technology and Politics section

Sam Edwards, Quinnipiac University

International Environmental Space Law: Towards Sustainable Use of Low Earth Orbit

Mary Lind, Binghamton University, SUNY

Digital Damage Control: Cyberattacks and the Logic of Online Censorship

Chloe Morgado, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Empire of Code: Palantir Technologies, Techno-Nationalism, and the Authoritarian Turn in U.S. Digital Governance

PANEL CHAIR: Tobias T. Gibson, Westminster College (MO)

DISCUSSANT: Tobias T. Gibson, Westminster College (MO)

3-F: (KINGSLAND): Public Policy of, by, and for the Public Good: Designing Policy with People in Mind

sponsored by the Public Policy section

Marc Eisner, Wesleyan University

Crisis and the Hobbled Leviathan: Inviting Catastrophe

Anthony Dell'Aera, Worcester State University

Going Against the Flow: Anti-Fluoridation Water Policy in the City of Worcester, Massachusetts

Nicole Freiner, Bryant University

Assessing Childhood Food Security: Policy and the Pandemic in New England

Michael Moltz, Shippensburg University

A Cross-National Analysis of Work-Life Balance and Public Administrator Turnover Intentions

PANEL CHAIR: Gregory Burnep, College of the Holy Cross

DISCUSSANT: Gregory Burnep, College of the Holy Cross

3-G (SHELBURNE): Polling and Elections

sponsored by the American Politics section

Rachael Cobb, Suffolk University

From Classroom to Polling Place: The Role of Poll Worker Experience in Civic Attitudes

Michael Kerr, University of Massachusetts School of Law - Dartmouth

Cutting the Gordian Knot of Gerrymandering in the Shortest Straight Line

Katja Kleinberg, Binghamton University, SUNY

U.S. Perceptions of Government Intervention in the Economy

Sawyer Rogers, University of Massachusetts Amherst

How State-Local Interest Groups Change the Rules of the Game: New Hampshire's SB2

PANEL CHAIR: Rich Clark, Vermont State University - Castleton

DISCUSSANT: Rich Clark, Vermont State University - Castleton

3-H (VALCOUR): Reflections on Canadian Political Leadership & Diplomacy

sponsored by the Comparative and Canadian Politics section

Alexandre Couture Gagnon, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Reynaldo Rodriguez-Vazquez, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

The end of the Gérin-Lajoie doctrine? Québec's relation with Texas

Jim McHugh, University of Akron

Canadian Soft Power and Paradiplomacy

David Plazek, Vermont State University

Realist or liberal? Pierre Trudeau's time as Prime Minister

David Rovinsky, United States Department of State

John Ibbitson and the Reordering of Canadian Political Space

PANEL CHAIR: Paul Petterson, Central Connecticut State University

DISCUSSANT: Paul Petterson, Central Connecticut State University

3-I ... n/a

3-J (AMPHITHEATER): Undergraduate Panel – Fairness and Equity

sponsored by the Undergraduate Research Committee

Madison Albert, McGill University

Rawlsian Duties of Justice and Justice as Decolonization

Sara Driscoll, Bridgewater State University

Why Some May Not “Just Believe Science”: A Rhetorical Examination of Disparities in Public Health Distrust within the Framework of Health Equity

Leah Mueller, University of Vermont

Conflicting fairness ideas in living wage law conflicts: Investigating the DC Large Retailer Accountability Act

Bridget Quiroga, University of Connecticut

Exploring How Social Movements Influence the Right to Education for Undocumented Students

Alexis Worthen, Simmons University

Girlbossing Too Close To The Sun: Rand, Friedman, and the Feminist Critique of the Market Individual

PANEL CHAIR: Tess Marchant-Shapiro, Southern Connecticut State University

DISCUSSANT: Scott McLean, Quinnipiac University

**PLEASE JOIN US FOR COFFEE SERVICE
Diamond Ballroom Foyer**

4-A (EMERALD1): Taboos in Judicial Politics

sponsored by the Public Law section

Bree Bang-Jensen, University of Georgia

Breaking the Habit: Withdrawal from Drug Treaties

Tobias T. Gibson, Westminster College (MO)

Isaac Thomas, Westminster College (MO)

Intoxication, Impairment, and Inconsistent Consent: Miranda's Blind Spot in Police Interrogations

Virginia Hettinger, University of Connecticut

Allison Yankle, Catawba College

Positivity Bias and (In)judiciousness: Perceptions of the Judiciary and Responses to Violations of Judicial Ethics Norms?

Helen Knowles-Gardner, Institute for Free Speech

The Selma 29: When Courage Risked Conviction (Or Much, Much Worse)

PANEL CHAIR: Michael Catalano, University of Scranton

DISCUSSANT: Kathleen Sullivan, Ohio University

4-B (EMERALD2): State and Local I

sponsored by the American Politics section

Kimberly Bergendahl, University of Connecticut

Is Good Government a Good Idea? Municipal Responses to Ethics Reform in Connecticut

Bradford Demarest, Saint Michael's College

Emily Gates, Saint Michael's College

Elsa Gordon, Saint Michael's College

Damascene Niyongere, Saint Michael's College

Candas Pinar, Saint Michael's College

Tulasha Pradhan, Saint Michael's College

Patricia Siplon, Saint Michael's College

Benjamin Wilson, Saint Michael's College

The Emotional Framing of Social Capital in Political Speech: A Mixed Methods Analysis of Vermont Governor COVID-19 Press Conferences

Tess Marchant-Shapiro, Southern Connecticut State University

Sophia Gugliotti, Southern Connecticut State University

Andrew Marchant-Shapiro, Southern Connecticut State University

Connections in Layered Communities: Loaves and Fishes, New Haven

Paul Petterson, Central Connecticut State University

In The Place Where It Started: How Bernie Sanders' Time As Mayor of Burlington, Vermont Shaped His National Politics

PANEL CHAIR: John Berg, Suffolk University

DISCUSSANT: John Berg, Suffolk University

4-C (EMERALD3): The Politics of Policy Exclusion

sponsored by the Public Policy section

Shelby Cook Shannon, University at Albany, SUNY

The Public vs. The Publicly Poor: An Analysis of the Role of Public Space Regulation Ordinances in Social and Political Exclusion

Ashley Fox, University at Albany, SUNY

Hyesang Noh, University at Albany, SUNY

Let Them Eat Pets: Scapegoating and Support for Restrictive Migration Policies

Elizabeth Sharrow, University of Massachusetts Amherst

James Druckman, University of Rochester

Exclusion as Equity Policy?: Stakeholder Opinion and Transgender Athletes in Intercollegiate Athletics

Patricia Strach, University at Albany, SUNY

How Experience Shapes Expectations of Government: Lessons from the Opioid Epidemic

PANEL CHAIR: Katherine Rader, University at Albany, SUNY

DISCUSSANT: Samuel Williams, Dartmouth College

4-D (DIAMOND1): Who Shapes Politics? Identity, Power, and Political Influence

sponsored by the Race, Gender, and Intersectionality section

Mahesh Admankar, University of Massachusetts Boston

Beyond Policy and Politics in South Asia: Caste and the Limits of Development in southern Indian state

Zachary Baum, Rutgers University

When QTPOC Run, QTPOC Win: Intersectional Ambition and the Fight for State Legislative Power in America

Nhat-Dang Do, Trinity College

Jack Trent-Dorfman, University of California - San Diego

Narratives of Influence: Racial Minority Interest Groups and Narrative Lobbying in California

Woo Jin Kang, Kyungpook National University

Authoritarian Nostalgia without Memory: Determinant of Park Chung Hee Nostalgia among Korean Youth

Seungjoon Yoo, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Political Learning and Participation across Immigrant Generations: Evidence from Asian Americans

PANEL CHAIR: Sophie Chin, Simmons University

DISCUSSANT: Indira Sinha, College of Commerce

4-E (DIAMOND2): International Law, Justice, and Human Rights

sponsored by the International Relations section

Joshua Leon, Iona University

The Life Atomic: City Planning Under The Threat Of Annihilation, 1945-1960

Vanessa Portillo, Central Connecticut State University

Threads of Resilience and A legacy of Displacement

Jessica Schofield, Western Connecticut State University

Kate Jackson, Western Connecticut State University

Hateful Misinformation and Democratic Backsliding

Kirin Taylor, Syracuse University

Blueprints from Abroad: International Law in Domestic Housing Rights Movements

PANEL CHAIR: Wendy Martinek, Binghamton University

DISCUSSANT: Owen Temby, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

4-F (KINGSLAND): ROUNDTABLE: Trump 2.0: Reshaping the Presidency?

sponsored by the American Politics section

Matthew Dickinson, Middlebury College

Alex Garlick, University of Vermont

Lisa Holmes, University of Vermont

June Speakman, Roger Williams University

PANEL CHAIR: Dante Scala, University of New Hampshire

4-G (SHELBURNE): ROUNDTABLE: Contemporary International Relations: Lessons from Political Philosophy

sponsored by the International Relations section

David Clinton, Baylor University

Eric Fleury, Connecticut College

Michael Gonzalez, University of Toledo

Joshua King, United States Military Academy

PANEL CHAIR: Nathan Orlando, Benedictine College

DISCUSSANT: Stephen Sims, Rochester Institute of Technology

4-H (VALCOUR): Institutional Innovation and Change in American Political Development

sponsored by the Politics and History section

Beau Breslin, Skidmore College

The Edit that Still Haunts America

Justin Greenman, Yale University

Guy Vander Jagt and the Allure of the Insecure Majority

Douglas Harris, Loyola University Maryland

Party Leadership Amid Change: The Varied Leadership Career of Tip O'Neill

Bradley Hays, Union College

State-building In the Federal Judiciary: The Creation and Development of the Federal Defenders and Magistrate Systems

PANEL CHAIR: Daniel Klinghard, College of the Holy Cross

DISCUSSANT: Daniel Klinghard, College of the Holy Cross

PLEASE JOIN US FOR THE NEPSA COCKTAIL RECEPTION

5:30-6:30 PM

Atrium

5-A (EMERALD1): The Crossroads of Instability, Authoritarianism, & Trust

sponsored by the Comparative and Canadian Politics section

Min Hyun Abbey Cho, New York University

A Cross-National Analysis of Climate-Induced Migration and Political Instability

Miguel Glatzer, La Salle University

A Tale of Two Cities: Overtourism and Housing Policy in Lisbon and Barcelona

Seok Hyun Hur, Kyungpook National University

Woo Jin Kang, Kyungpook National University

Sung Ki-Soo, Kyungpook National University

Jinyoung Lee, Kyungpook National University

Insul Park, Kyungpook National University

The Impact of Efficiency–Order and Welfare-based Instrumental Understandings of Democracy on Authoritarian Support: The Moderating Role of Institutional Trust

Qiaomo Wu, University of Hong Kong

Regime Types and Economic Recovery Strategies: A Comparative Analysis of Democratic and Authoritarian Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic

PANEL CHAIR: Alexandre Couture Gagnon, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

DISCUSSANT: Alexandre Couture Gagnon, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

5-B (EMERALD2): ROUNDTABLE / WORKSHOP: The Power of Choice: Designing “Choose Your Own Adventure” Learning Experiences that Empower Student Agency in Political Science Classrooms

sponsored by the Race, Gender, and Intersectionality section

Bert Johnson, Middlebury College

Jonathan Wharton, Southern Connecticut State University

PANEL CHAIR: Nicholas Kapoor, Fairfield University

PANEL CHAIR: Carrie LeVan, Colby College

5-C (EMERALD3): Current Issues in US Foreign Policy

sponsored by the International Relations section

Kevin Buterbaugh, Southern Connecticut State University

Costel Calin, Southern Connecticut State University

Partisanship, Gender and Ambassadorial Placement: How the party affiliation of the president affects where men and women are appointed as ambassadors.

Thomas Carty, Springfield College

Christian Zionism and Donald Trump's First Term, 2017-2021

Sharyl Cross, St. Edward's University

Shifting Geopolitical Competition Among Major Powers and the Issue of Reciprocal Risk over Critical Rare Earth Minerals

David Rezvani, College of the Holy Cross

Independence or Partial Independence For Greenland?

PANEL CHAIR: MJ Peterson, University of Massachusetts Amherst

DISCUSSANT: MJ Peterson, University of Massachusetts Amherst

5-D (DIAMOND1): US Federal Government

sponsored by the American Politics section

Lisa Holmes, University of Vermont

The Judiciary as an Issue in Recent Presidential Election Campaigns

Theodore Keese, Georgetown University

Bizarrely Blue: Democratic Tilt of New England's Rural Congressional Districts

Theodore Masthay, DeSales University

Consensus to Contention: Developments in United States Attorney Confirmations

Jesse Usher Barrett, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Justin Burnworth, University of Massachusetts Amherst

When the Court Speaks Up: Rhetorical Shifts in the Chief Justice's Year-End Reports, 1992-2024

PANEL CHAIR: Dave Bridge, Baylor University

DISCUSSANT: Dave Bridge, Baylor University

5-E (DIAMOND2): Artificial Intelligence, Technology and Strategic Policymaking

sponsored by the Technology and Politics section

Samuel Olufeso, University of Massachusetts Lowell

Strategic Silencing: Disinformation, Surveillance, and Shutdowns in the Politics of Protest Deterrence

ASM Safwan Rob, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Detecting Strategic Ambiguity in Congressional Self-Regulation: AI-Enhanced Text Analysis of Trading Legislation Through Verbalized Sampling

Indira Sinha, College of Commerce

AI-Driven Transformations in Voting Behaviour: Micro-Targeting, Emotional Governance, and the Future of Electoral Politics

PANEL CHAIR: Chloe Morgado, University of Massachusetts Amherst

DISCUSSANT: Mary Lind, Binghamton University, SUNY

5-F (KINGSLAND): The Clyde McKee / Garrison Nelson New England Politics Roundtable

sponsored by the American Politics section

CONNECTICUT

Stefanie Chambers, Trinity College

MAINE

Jim Melcher, University of Maine - Farmington

MASSACHUSETTS

Jerold Duquette, Central Connecticut State University

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Christopher Galdieri, Saint Anselm College

RHODE ISLAND

Emily Lynch, University of Rhode Island

VERMONT

Paul Petterson, Central Connecticut State University

PANEL CHAIR: Garrison Nelson, University of Vermont

5-G (SHELBURNE): Law and Society

sponsored by the Public Law section

Michael Catalano, University of Scranton

Veteran Status of US District Judges and Presidential Power

Sophie Chin, Simmons University

The Uncomfortable Question: Addressing Sexual Violence Through a Prison Abolitionist Framework

Lauren Foley, Western Michigan University

Using Civil Rights Symbols in Constitutional Politics: Banning Affirmative Action in California and Michigan

PANEL CHAIR: Helen Knowles-Gardner, Institute for Free Speech

DISCUSSANT: Natalie Rogol, Rhode Island College

5-H (VALCOUR): ROUNDTABLE: Author Meets Readers: *The Adaptability Paradox: Political Inclusion and Constitutional Resilience*, by Stephen Skowronek

sponsored by the Political Theory section

Jacob Levy, McGill University
Nicole Mellow, Williams College
R. Shep Melnick, Boston College
Greg Weiner, Assumption College

PANEL CHAIR: Bryan Garsten, Yale University
DISCUSSANT: Stephen Skowronek, Yale University

5-I (WILLSBORO): Theorizing the Surreal: Public Policy Theories in a Time of Dysfunction

sponsored by the Public Policy section

Nutsa Chinchilakashvili, Simmons University
Challenging the Multiple Streams Framework in the Contemporary Context of Institutional Friction.

Anna Gagliastro, Simmons University
Policy Theory: From Order to Opportunity

Emmalyne Karnes, Simmons University
People, Perception, and the Policymaking Process

Dakota Svec, Simmons University
Everything is a Story: How The Formation of Social Issues Reflects the Need to Understand All Public Policy Through Narrative Structure

PANEL CHAIR: Gregory Williams, Simmons University
DISCUSSANT: Ryan LaRochelle, University of Maine

**PLEASE JOIN US FOR COFFEE SERVICE
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6-A (EMERALD1): The Lived Experience of Democracy: How People Make Meaning of Politics in Everyday Life

sponsored by the Public Policy section

Margaret Groarke, Manhattan University

Ishaan Jani, Manhattan University

Missed Opportunities: NYC Agency Based Voter Registration

Adanna Kalejaye, University of Massachusetts Boston

Climate Shocks and Urban Water Use: The Role of Institutional Response in Coastal Cities

Sohyon Pak, University of Massachusetts Boston

Origin of Wealth among Asian/Asian-Americans: International Remittances

Perri Leviss, Rhode Island College

Veronica Denison, Rhode Island College

Teaching Public Policy with Library Archives – How to use primary source data to promote applied public policy skills and learnings in undergraduate political science courses?

PANEL CHAIR: June Speakman, Roger Williams University

DISCUSSANT: June Speakman, Roger Williams University

6-B (EMERALD2): Judicial Behavior

sponsored by the Public Law section

Jonathan Chausovsky, SUNY Fredonia

A Coasean Theory of Corporate Charter Law

Shane Gleason, Trinity College

Aidan Gonzalez, University of Georgia

Kashmala Khan, Trinity College

Finding Your Voice: Intersectional Identities & Opinion-Writing on State Supreme Courts

Wendy Martinek, Binghamton University

Hayley Munir, Illinois State University

Amicus Curiae in State Courts of Last Resort

Santiago Virgüez Ruiz, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Navigating Confounderland: Discovering Latent Variables on Legal Texts for Causal Inference

PANEL CHAIR: Paul Collins, University of Massachusetts Amherst

DISCUSSANT: Tassiana Moura de Oliveira, University at Albany, SUNY

6-C (EMERALD3): South Asia: Global Issues

sponsored by the International Relations section

M. Aynal Haque, Montana Technological University

Nabell Siddiqui, Susquehanna University

Green or Grey? Chinese Development Investment and Politics of Climate Change in South Asia

Feryaz Ocakli, Skidmore College

Migration, Food Security, and Informal Finance: Afghan Refugees and Survival Networks

Sobia Paracha, Syracuse University

Nationalism and Political Contestation in Pakistan's Territorial Disputes

Nathan Smolucha, Harvard Extension School

Framing Strategies in Pakhtunistan: Exploring the Role of Pakhtunwali in Defining Ideological, Social and Political Interactions

PANEL CHAIR: Shyam Sriram, Canisius University

DISCUSSANT: Shyam Sriram, Canisius University

6-D (DIAMOND1): Southern Politics and History

sponsored by the Politics and History section

Hanna Allen, Georgetown University

A History of Mississippi Segregation Academies and How They Serve as Agents of Socialization in Students' Political Affiliations

Michael Gunter, Rollins College

Searching for Sustainability in the Sunshine State

Paul Herron, Providence College

Reclaiming the Southern Past: Black Suffering and Service

Andy Carr, New School for Social Research

Local Politics, Race, Rapid Transit: The Fall and (Partial) Restoration of Urban Rail Systems in Southeastern Virginia

PANEL CHAIR: Jim Twombly, Elmira College

DISCUSSANT: Jim Twombly, Elmira College

6-E (DIAMOND2): Economics, Elections, & Revolutions Revisited

sponsored by the Comparative and Canadian Politics section

Paul Manuel, Georgetown University

Weaponizing April 25: Chega, Counter-Memory, and Democratic Backsliding in Contemporary Portugal

Masako Okura, Columbus State University

"Manufacturing Crisis in Japan: Sanseito's Populist Breakthrough and the Politics of Purity"

Simon Vodrey, Carleton University

Pipelines, Political Polarization, Wedge Politics, & Anger as a Motivating Factor in Canadian Politics

Qiaomo Wu, University of Hong Kong

External Infrastructure Finance and Elections in Post-Liberation States

PANEL CO-CHAIR AND DISCUSSANT: Miguel Glatzer, La Salle University

PANEL CO-CHAIR AND DISCUSSANT: Matthew Carlson, University of Vermont

6-F (KINGSLAND): Democratic Habits

sponsored by the Political Theory section

Kevin McGravey, Merrimack College

Alison Russell, Merrimack College

Between Form and Function: The Role of Unstructured Play in Democratic Education

Wendy Wright, William Paterson University

Solidarity and Care: Twinned Principles in Angela Y. Davis's Activist Philosophy

Nicholas Tampio, Fordham University

The Health of Democracy: Why Democratic Theorists Need to Discuss Public Health Nutrition

Hadass Silver, Holy Family University

A Ventriloquist Act: Against Epistemic Deference

PANEL CHAIR: Natalie Pennisi, McGill University

DISCUSSANT: Jim McHugh, University of Akron

6-G (SHELBURNE): ROUNDTABLE: Trump 2.0: Destruction or Policy Revolution?

sponsored by the American Politics section

Corey Brettschneider, Brown University

Nicole Mellow, Williams College

Russ Muirhead, Dartmouth University

Peter Skerry, Boston College

Stephen Skowronek, Yale University

Jeffrey Tulis, University of Texas

PANEL CHAIR: R. Shep Melnick, Boston College

6-H (VALCOUR): The Enduring Problem of Faction

sponsored by the Political Theory section

Kevin Akalski, Baylor University

From Moral Indignation to Gentleness: Thrasymachus' Blush in Plato's Republic

Kayla Bartsch, Independent Scholar

"Necessary to Good Government and the Happiness of Mankind": The Founders' Vision of Public Education as a Solution to Faction

Michael Lucchese, Liberty Fund

"Sensations of Horror and Disgust": Shakespeare's Coriolanus and the Problem of Faction

Ayla McBreen, Georgetown University

The Weaponization of Faction: Machiavelli's Prince and the Strategic Uses of Political Division

PANEL CHAIR: Murray Dry, Middlebury College

DISCUSSANT: Daniel Fram, Middlebury College

6-I (WILLSBORO): Administrative Burden and Administrative Capacity

sponsored by the Public Policy section

Jason Barabas, Dartmouth College

Samuel Williams, Dartmouth College

What Must Aspiring Citizens Know? Civics Test Questions in the U.S. Immigration Naturalization Process

Amalini Fernando, University at Albany, SUNY

Copy, Paste, Pass: How Model Legislation Shapes Consumer Data Privacy Policy in the U.S.

Susan Moffitt, Brown University

Cameron Arnzen, Brown University

Alejandro Contreras, Brown University

Lindsey Kaler, Brown University

Bryan Natividad, Brown University

Niamh Stull, Brown University

The Politics of Administrative Ease

Joseph Popcun, University at Albany, SUNY

Policy Entropy: The Drift toward Ordinary Policy Failure in 10 States

PANEL CHAIR: Patricia Strach, University at Albany, SUNY

DISCUSSANT: Melissa Lyon, University at Albany, SUNY

6-J (AMPHITHEATER): Undergraduate Panel – Political Life and Public Policy

sponsored by the Undergraduate Research Committee

Carlos Aguero, Southern Connecticut State University

Kenneth Salem, Southern Connecticut State University

Baldwin Through Foucault: An Analysis of the Black Church

Jaclyn Dziadose, Saint Anselm College

Developed Democracies and Polarization: The Nature of Healthy and Unhealthy Politics During the Brexit Debate

Aziz Haddad, McGill University

The Working Day and the Erosion of Civic Virtue

Antonia Kambolis, Trinity College

“Because You Asked: Relational Organizing Through The Hartford Voter Captain’s Project”

Elizabeth Muller, Providence College

Diasporic Belonging of Palestinian American Women in New England

PANEL CHAIR: Scott McLean, Quinnipiac University

DISCUSSANT: Tess Marchant-Shapiro, Southern Connecticut State University

PLEASE JOIN US FOR LUNCH AND THE NEPSA BUSINESS MEETING
Lake Champlain Exhibition Hall

FEATURED PRESENTATION

The Honorable Myrna Pérez
United States Circuit Court Judge, Second Circuit Court of Appeals

AWARDING OF THE BEST PAPER PRIZES FOR THE 2025 ANNUAL MEETING

JOHN C. DONOVAN PRIZE FOR BEST PAPER WRITTEN BY A FACULTY MEMBER

Michael Catalano, University of Scranton

Allison Bugenis, Binghamton University

Hayley Munir, Illinois State University

“Safeguarding Presidential Policy through Appointments to the US Court of Appeals”

ROBERT C. WOOD PRIZE FOR BEST PAPER WRITTEN BY A GRADUATE STUDENT

Angie Jo, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

“From Crisis to Capacity: Federal Interventions and the Evolution of State Welfare Institution”

WILSON CAREY McWILLIAMS PRIZE FOR BEST PAPER WRITTEN BY AN UNDERGRADUATE

Bee Mayberry, Mount Holyoke College

*“Praise Jesus (And Trump): Language and Indoctrination Strategies
Used by the Alt-Right and Christian Nationalists”*

7-A (EMERALD1): Voting and Behavior

sponsored by the American Politics section

Zachary Albert, Brandeis University

Eric Miller, Independent Scholar

Investigating Overreporting of Voter Turnout in Primary Elections

Graham Backman, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Tatishe Nteta, University of Massachusetts Amherst

The influence of anti-Latino implicit and explicit racial appeals in candidate evaluation

Scott McLean, Quinnipiac University

The COVID-19 Lockdown in the Political Psychology of Generation Z

PANEL CHAIR: Theodore Masthay, DeSales University

DISCUSSANT: Rachael Cobb, Suffolk University

7-B (EMERALD2): Liberal Democracy Under Duress

sponsored by the Politics and History section

Altug Aslanoglu, Syracuse University

Transforming Guardians: The Evolution of Civil-Military Relations In Turkey Under Erdoğan

Girma Parris, Case Western Reserve University

Why All the Claims of Objectivity from the Partisan Media: Path Dependency, Drift, Conversion, Layering, and the Standard of Objectivity

Aaron Weinstein, Fairfield University

Catholicism, Democracy, and Civil Religion

Gregory Williams, Simmons University

Moral Beliefs of a Declining Hegemonic Power

PANEL CHAIR: Matt Ulricksen, Community College of Rhode Island

DISCUSSANT: Robert Downes, University of Connecticut

7-C (EMERALD3): ROUNDTABLE / WORKSHOP: Beyond the Ban: Designing Authentic Political Science Assignments in the Age of AI

sponsored by the Technology and Politics section

PANEL CHAIR: Nicholas Kapoor, Fairfield University

PANEL CHAIR: Carrie LeVan, Colby College

7-D (DIAMOND1): Freedom, Hope, Sympathy, and the Human Experience

sponsored by the Political Theory section

Nicholas Anderson, Ohio State University

Philosophical Admiration and Republican Hope: The Politics of Teleology in Kant's Third Critique

Natalie Pennisi, McGill University

Does Sympathy Enlighten? On the Relationship between Sympathy, Solidarity, and Injustice

Kristina Clarke, Southern Connecticut State University

Patterns of Anarchist Organizing and Burnout: 2015-2025

PANEL CHAIR: Nicholas Tampio, Fordham University

DISCUSSANT: Nicholas Tampio, Fordham University

7-E (DIAMOND2): Africa at the Crossroads: Reimagining Global Governance and Asserting Agency

sponsored by the International Relations section

Harry Acquah, Clark Atlanta University

Rethinking International Relations from Africa

Prince Ifoh, Clark Atlanta University

Pan-Africanism and the Postcolonial State: Rethinking Legitimacy, Governance, and African Unity in the 21st Century

Eliud Kabamanya, Clark Atlanta University

South-South Cooperation or Reinforcing Structural Dependency: An Analysis of China-Tanzania Relations.

Samuel Nani, Clark Atlanta University

Africa and the Neoliberal Order: Towards Africa's World Order

PANEL CHAIR: Georgina Wanjiru, Clark Atlanta University

DISCUSSANT: Georgina Wanjiru, Clark Atlanta University

7-F (KINGSLAND): ROUNDTABLE: SCOTUS 2025

sponsored by the Public Law section

Bernard Bell, Rutgers University Law School

Mark Graber, Francis King Carey School of Law, University of Maryland

Julie Novkov, University at Albany, SUNY

Carol Nackenoff, Swarthmore College

PANEL CHAIR: Howard Schweber, University of Wisconsin

7-G (SHELBURNE): Individuals and Economics

sponsored by the Political Theory section

Emily Armand, Simmons University

Capitalism As a Feedback Loop in U.S. Policy

Callum Ingram, University of Nevada, Reno

The Fearsome Audit: Walter Benjamin's Critical-Speculative Theory of Money

Alyssa Maraj Grahame, Independent Scholar

Financial independence: sovereignty in an age of pecuniary imperialism

Yujin Choi, University of Vermont

Individual Autonomy: A Western Parochial Value?

PANEL CHAIR: Jonathan Chausovsky, SUNY Fredonia

DISCUSSANT: Jonathan Chausovsky, SUNY Fredonia

7-H (VALCOUR): Democratic Norms

sponsored by the American Politics section

John Berg, Suffolk University

What's Up with the Democratic Party?

Michelle Brophy-Baermann, Rhode Island College

Democracy Dies in Broad Daylight

Samuel Little, Boston College

American Populism and American Democracy

Natalie Rogol, Rhode Island College

Anna Fleming, Mercer University

Malcolm Mann, Rhode Island College

Matthew Montgomery, Texas Christian University

Connor O'Neal, Rhode Island College

Brian Rice, Rhode Island College

Rogue Presidency: An American Story of Checks and Balances

Jim Twombly, Elmira College

Polarization and Presidential Power: An Explanation for the Increase in Use of Unilateral Power via Executive Orders

PANEL CHAIR: Christopher Galdieri, Saint Anselm College

DISCUSSANT: Christopher Galdieri, Saint Anselm College

7-I (WILLSBORO): Moments in America

sponsored by the Political Theory section

Greg Collins, Yale University

Alexander Crummell on the Social Principle, Racial Pride, and Civil Society

Jason Jividen, Saint Vincent College

Institutions and Imperfections: The American Founding and the Limits of Political Science

Alexandra Buzzini, Yale University

Godly Populists: Redemption and Retribution in Puritan Political Thought

Esra Doger, University of Massachusetts Lowell

Catherine Jarry, University of Massachusetts Lowell

Arie Perliger, University of Massachusetts Lowell

Tradwives Across Borders: Cultural and Ideological Patterns in U.S. and Turkish Influencer Content

PANEL CHAIR: Kieran Mabey, Yale University

DISCUSSANT: Kieran Mabey, Yale University

7-J (AMPHITHEATER): Undergraduate Panel – Media and Public Opinion

sponsored by the Undergraduate Research Committee

Courtney Butts, Providence College

Migrants in Media: A Tri-National Study of the United States, Trinidad & Tobago, and Mexico

Sebastian D’Amico, University of Vermont

The White Lotus and Attitudes about Wealth and Mean World Beliefs

Thomas Leung, Tufts University

From Liberalization to Weaponization: A Mixed-Methods Analysis of Media Sentiment and Strategic Trade Policy in the Modern Sino-U.S. Rivalry

PANEL CHAIR: Tess Marchant-Shapiro, Southern Connecticut State University

DISCUSSANT: Perri Leviss, Rhode Island College

**PLEASE JOIN US FOR COFFEE SERVICE
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8-A: n/a

8-B (EMERALD2): State and Local II

sponsored by the American Politics section

Adam Eichen, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Conceding Political Power: Why New York Lawmakers Voted to Overhaul Their Campaign Finance System

Adam Myers, Providence College

Patrick Reynolds, Independent Scholar

The Centralization of Town Government in New England, 1979-2025

Deborah Schildkraut, Tufts University

Rongbo Jin, Chinese University of Hong Kong Shenzhen

Out-party animosity at the state and local level

Owen Temby, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Allison Kaika, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Examining the Relationship Between Civic Agriculture Participation and Civic Engagement in South Texas

PANEL CHAIR: Sawyer Rogers, University of Massachusetts Amherst

DISCUSSANT: Sawyer Rogers, University of Massachusetts Amherst

8-C ... n/a

8-D (DIAMOND1): Africa at the Intersection of Global Politics

sponsored by the International Relations section

Ebenezer Nana Botsio, Utah State University

Great Power Competition In Africa: US Aid Responses To Chinese Aid And Investment

Priscilla Torres, Wellesley College

The Gatekeepers of Peace: How Community Characteristics Influence International Peacebuilding

Qiaomo Wu, University of Hong Kong

The Paradox of Pragmatism: Chinese Investment and Its Impact on African Governance

PANEL CHAIR: M. Aynal Haque, Montana Technological University

DISCUSSANT: M. Aynal Haque, Montana Technological University

8-E (DIAMOND2): ROUNDTABLE: Author Meets Readers: *Answering to Us: Why Democracy Demands Accountability*, by Minh Ly

sponsored by the Political Theory section

Corey Brettschneider, Brown University

Jamie Mayerfeld, University of Washington

Russ Muirhead, Dartmouth University

Wendy Wright, William Paterson University

PANEL CHAIR: Alec Ewald, University of Vermont

DISCUSSANT: Minh Ly, University of Vermont

8-F (KINGSLAND): Constitutional Politics

sponsored by the Public Law section

Sonu Bedi, Dartmouth College

Playing the Constitutional Game

Robert Downes, University of Connecticut

The Majesty of Law and the Separation of Powers: Sandra Day O'Connor as a Platonic Philosopher-Queen

Giuliano Espino, Framingham State University

Thomas Severo, Framingham State University

Skrmetti and the Global Turn: Illiberal Globalism in the Supreme Court's Sexuality Jurisprudence

Alex Hindman, College of the Holy Cross

Governing By Discussion: The Constitutionalism of Attorney General Edward H. Levi

PANEL CHAIR: Jesse Usher Barrett, University of Massachusetts Amherst

DISCUSSANT: Howard Schweber, University of Wisconsin

8-G (SHELBURNE): ROUNDTABLE: What Can APD Teach Us About Our Current Political Problems?

sponsored by the Politics and History section

Amel Ahmed, University of Massachusetts-Amherst

Mark Graber, Francis King Carey School of Law, University of Maryland

Carol Nackenoff, Swarthmore College

PANEL CHAIR: Ryan LaRochelle, University of Maine

DISCUSSANT: Anna Law, Brooklyn College

8-H (VALCOUR): ROUNDTABLE: Civic Thought and Liberal Education

sponsored by the Political Theory section

Ryan Hanley, Boston College

Russ Muirhead, Dartmouth University

PANEL CHAIR: Bryan Garsten, Yale University

**NEPSA extends its thanks to Joe Amsler
Duplicating Supervisor, Shippensburg University
for his stellar work in supervising the
printing of the conference program.**

INDEX OF PARTICIPANTS

Acquah, Clark Atlanta University	35	Cobb, Suffolk University	14, 18, 34
Admankar, University of Massachusetts Boston	21	Collins, University of Massachusetts Amherst	7, 28
Agadzhanova, Georgia State University	14	Collins, Yale University	13, 37
Aguero, Southern Connecticut State University	32	Colman, Ave Maria University	8
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Rethinking International Relations from Africa

This discussion is built around a foundational question: What would International Relations look like if it began from Africa, rather than Europe? It argues that the discipline is predominantly shaped by Euro-American political traditions and security paradigms, which have rendered Africa absent, marginal and non-instrumental, as Dunn and Shaw put it. Africa has not been passive in world politics as early IR theorists have claimed. From the political economics of the slave trade through the anti-colonial Pan-Africanism, the continent has consistently been shaped by the very system that now attempts to define it. This work presents three lenses that challenge the conventional frameworks of International Relations. It will first interrogate the genealogy of Eurocentric IR, challenging the inherited assumptions of the Westphalian order for Africa. Second, it will explore Africa's centrality in global politics by addressing the "theoretical orphan," a region whose resources, conflicts, and institutions have significantly influenced international politics and yet have continuously been excluded from theory-making IR was built through the empire, then what happens when we start from those whom the empire acted upon instead? And then the final chapter will broadly discuss the implications of an African-centered International Relations. This intervention aims to contribute to the growing calls for a decolonized and pluralistic International Relations by positioning Africa not just as a subject to be theorized, but as a producer of its own theory. The methodology relies on Pan-African texts, post-colonial theory and the African historical body of knowledge that emphasizes the need for conceptual frameworks rooted in African political realities.

Mahesh Admankar, University of Massachusetts Boston

Beyond Policy and Politics in South Asia: Caste and the Limits of Development in southern Indian state

This paper offers an autoethnographic reflection on the intersection of caste, development, and policy in India, drawing on the author's lived experiences in rural India. Using personal narratives alongside a review of literature on development theory and practice, the study explores what development truly means for historically oppressed caste communities. The findings highlight that caste remains a persistent source of social and economic inequality, humiliation, and structural barriers to development. Despite well-intentioned development policies at both the national level and in the state of Telangana, these interventions often fail to holistically empower marginalized caste groups because they do not address the fundamental issue of caste-based exclusion. Through a critical engagement with major economic and development theories, the paper argues that mainstream development discourse tends to marginalize social inequities, treating economic growth and policy implementation as neutral or universally beneficial, while overlooking the lived realities of caste oppression. This exclusion perpetuates inequality and limits the transformative potential of development programs. By integrating personal experiences with scholarly insights, the paper underscores the importance of incorporating the perspectives and voices of caste-oppressed communities into development policymaking. Drawing on the ideas of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, it advocates for a development approach that recognizes and addresses caste-based structural barriers, rather than relying solely on top-down policy prescriptions. The study contributes to broader debates in political science and development studies by emphasizing the inseparability of social justice and development outcomes, and by demonstrating how autoethnographic methods can illuminate the lived dimensions of policy impacts. Ultimately, the paper calls for a reorientation of development discourse in India—one that centralizes the experiences of marginalized caste communities and engages with Ambedkar's vision of an inclusive, equitable society.

Carlos Aguero, Southern Connecticut State University

Baldwin Through Foucault: An Analysis of the Black Church

This paper examines the literary works of James Baldwin through the philosophical lens of Michel Foucault, aiming to explore how religious conformity affects racial and sexual identity within the Black community. The paper argues that religious institutions, specifically Black churches, employ mechanisms of disciplinary power and normative regulation through the weaponization of discourse, surveillance, and social norms. Reflecting on Foucault's theory of power as relational, diffuse, and embedded in institutions – particularly within the context of the Black Church– their respective power relegates sexual differences, gender nonconformity, and acts of desire to abnormality. Since Black churches have been the predominant political and social institutions of the Black community, theologically imposed gender and sexuality norms have often limited male and gay identities. Baldwin's works, particularly *Giovanni's Room*, *Another Country*, and *The Amen Corner*, demonstrate how religious conformity reinforces internalized oppression, resulting in anger, shame, and both voluntary and involuntary alienation. Baldwin's viewpoint parallels Foucault's concept of power, especially in his *History of Sexuality*. Baldwin's experience of shifting from an observer to a witness revealed the concealed systems of sexual, religious, and racial control. This paper holds a magnifying glass to these systems, examining how Christianity can become an instrument of social regulation—policing the bodies, identity, and desires of individuals. Fusing Foucault's structural theories with Baldwin's lived and narrative experiences unveils a legacy of oppressive doctrine within the Black Church. Ultimately, this paper argues that religious conformity – that which is supported by societal normative discourse and institutional power – threatens personal autonomy and self-realization. This is especially true for queer and gender-nonconforming people in the Black community. Understanding the political and personal repercussions of conformity as well as envisioning spaces of resistance, identity reclamation, and dignity requires identifying and dismantling these power structures

Kevin Akalski, Baylor University

From Moral Indignation to Gentleness: Thrasymachus' Blush in Plato's Republic

In Book I of Plato's *Republic*, Thrasymachus angrily proposes that justice is simply that which the ruling faction of a city calls its own advantage (338c-339a). This paper argues that Thrasymachus' anger is a form of moral indignation. Thrasymachus is indignant at rulers because he thinks that they deceive the ruled into doing that which is disadvantageous for themselves. This paper finds something underneath Thrasymachus' anger: a deeper belief in an independent standard of justice, namely, his notion that justice is another's good (343c). Thrasymachus thinks that justice is bad for the one who is just but good for the person whom he serves. This paper explains that Thrasymachus' view of justice underpins his activity as a teacher of rhetoric who exposes the disadvantage of justice. Indeed, if justice is bad yet binding, then the just person—as the person devoted to the good of others—should in fact encourage others to be unjust. Yet, this act of justice should lead Thrasymachus to congratulate the rulers for their injustice—that is, for acting according to his teaching—for those who rule would then be doing exactly what Thrasymachus hopes for them. By recognizing this problem, given his two claims that justice is what the rulers call their own advantage and that justice is another's good, Thrasymachus blushes (350d), for Socrates has revealed him to be in fact deeply attached to justice. Thus, he grows gentle (354a).

Khadija Alaoui, Mohammed VI Polytechnic University

Why the Concept of Political Risk Remains Theoretically Underdeveloped in Political Science?

This paper traces his transformation of faction from a moral pathology into a political resource. I suggest that Machiavelli's treatment of faction anticipates modern realist approaches to politics that reject idealized notions of harmony and instead focus on the management of conflict.

Zachary Albert, Brandeis University

Investigating Overreporting of Voter Turnout in Primary Elections

Respondent overreporting of turnout, or claiming to have voted when they did not, is a well-known problem in surveys of the electorate. The literature on this topic has focused exclusively on overreporting of general election turnout. But with the growing importance of primary elections – and the corresponding increase in scholarly attention to voters in them – it is imperative that we better understand inaccurate statements of voter participation in primaries. While some studies of the primary electorate use validated voter turnout records to identify primary voters, most rely on self-reported turnout, potentially biasing our understanding of this important group. We investigate primary overreporting using data from the Cooperative Election Study (CES), focusing on years in which the CES asked for self-reported primary turnout and also validated primary participation using public voter files. By comparing validated records to self-stated turnout, we identify primary overreporters, assess the frequency of such overreporting, and investigate the demographic and political characteristics most associated with it. We compare these findings to similar analyses of overreporting in general elections to understand the commonalities and differences in overreporting across the two election types. Finally, we replicate several previous studies that used self-reported turnout to study the primary electorate, assessing the extent to which overreporting biases these findings. Our results add to our understanding of voter overreporting and will inform the burgeoning literature on primary electorates.

Madison Albert, McGill University

Rawlsian Duties of Justice and Justice as Decolonization

This paper attempts to reconcile Rawls' natural duty of justice, as elaborated by Tommie Shelby in "Justice, Deviance and the Dark Ghetto," with the lived realities of Indigenous women within settlercolonial states, particularly focusing on the Canadian context. Where Shelby thinks the oppressed hold a duty qua person to avoid dismantling "reasonably just" institutions, Indigenous feminist scholars contend that such institutions are inherently oppressive and are only sustained through the marginalization of and violence against Indigenous women. How, then, can a duty of justice apply to Indigenous women? Drawing on the theoretical framework of Shelby's argument and the insights of Indigenous feminist scholars, this paper proposes a reconceptualization of the duty of justice for Indigenous women. It argues that while Indigenous women maintain a natural duty of justice, the content and application of this duty must diverge from Shelby's framework. Rather than working within unjust state structures, Indigenous women's pursuit of justice necessitates undermining the state's institutions. This approach aligns with the broader goal of decolonization, which seeks to restore Indigenous sovereignty and dismantle systems of oppression. By expanding Shelby's conception of the duty of justice to accommodate diverse understandings of justice, this paper advocates for a more inclusive and responsive approach to social justice theory.

Hanna Allen, Georgetown University

A History of Mississippi Segregation Academies and How They Serve as Agents of Socialization in Students' Political Affiliations

Segregation academies are products of the desegregation of public schools in the American South. For decades, they have educated generations of families within this region of the United States. Today, segregation academies are still active educational institutions, with thousands of schools representing a period of history that founded them based on the exclusion of African Americans. Previous literature on segregation academies details their histories, but little focuses on them within a twenty-first-century context. Further, this research asks how segregation academies socialize their students in political affiliations. Little research on political socialization has differentiated by school type, and none have studied segregation academies. Therefore, through a qualitative interview study, this research seeks to answer the research question to fill this literature gap. This study finds that not only do segregation academies socialize, but they tend to socialize in a conservative direction. Interview participants also experience reverse socialization in that their political affiliations are different than the conservative viewpoint their school provided. These unique findings suggest a path forward in which segregation academies can learn to nurture all student beliefs in an environment where all opinions can be heard and respected.

Nicholas Anderson, Ohio State University

Philosophical Admiration and Republican Hope: The Politics of Teleology in Kant's Third Critique

Ultimately, this paper seeks to uncover how Machiavelli twists traditional political failure: failure is not the breakdown of unity, but the failure to use division effectively. In an era of resurgent populism and hyper partisanship, Machiavelli's analysis offers both a warning and a mirror, revealing how leaders may cultivate division not despite its dangers, but because of its strategic utility.

Carolyn Arcand, University of Southern Maine

Exploring methods used to engage Maine residents in municipal public meetings

Opportunities for residents to take part in local governance can be structured in ways that enable more or less authentic participation. Less authentic invitations to participate may be token or symbolic efforts where resident involvement is superficial and has no real impact. Increasingly authentic opportunities enable residents to exert genuine influence within government problem-solving and decision-making processes (Arnstein, 1969). New England states have a tradition of local control and have historically encouraged residents to take an active role in shaping municipal policies and programs (Maine Municipal Association, 2016). This research project explores how municipal administrators in Maine plan for and structure public meetings, and the extent to which these methods foster authentic participation. My paper will report on initial results of a survey exploring current methods and strategies used by Maine municipal administrators to engage residents in public meetings. The survey was designed and pretested in summer and early fall 2025 and has been distributed to local government clerks in each of Maine's 485 municipalities. Survey questions cover how municipal administrators plan for and organize public meetings, barriers to public participation, accommodations available for residents, and strategies for improving public engagement. Findings will highlight methods used to engage Maine residents in municipal governance and may reveal innovative approaches to fostering authentic engagement. Results will also shed light on the explicit and implicit messages that municipal administrators convey to residents about expectations and opportunities for participating in the public policymaking process.

Emily Armand, Simmons University

Capitalism As a Feedback Loop in U.S. Policy

The United States has faced a significant breakdown of institutions, norms, precedent and democratic principles during the second Trump administration. The nation has shifted closer towards oligarchy within the past year due to late stage capitalism and policies that provide elites with more power than ever before. The current political and economic system can be deeper understood through the lens of feedback loops that simultaneously work to create and reinforce patterns. Capitalism in the United States has been formulated and upheld through public policies that reinforce privatization, individualism, and systems that benefit the wealthy over the people. An application of feedback loops to political systems may increase understanding surrounding the ways in which the status quo is upheld, even when harmful or unpopular. In addition, it may provide some suggestions about ways to break away from harmful cycles. This study examines capitalism as a feedback loop that's embedded within the institutions, policies and societal norms within the United States. Capitalism and its inherent dynamics of power and oppression will be examined as a specific feedback loop that operates both independently and in conjunction with adjacent systems. Public policies, court decisions, significant events and dominant social discourses will be examined to conceptualize the functioning of a feedback loop in regards to capitalism.

Altug Aslanoglu, Syracuse University

Transforming Guardians: The Evolution of Civil-Military Relations In Turkey Under Erdoğan

Why do some civilian-led efforts to subordinate historically powerful militaries result not in weakened armed forces, but in enhanced military effectiveness? This paper addresses this question by examining the transformation of civil–military relations in Turkey under President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The paper argues that the Erdoğan government deliberately reconfigured the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) from a guardian of secular Kemalist principles into a tightly controlled instrument of civilian authority, prioritizing political loyalty and centralized oversight over traditional military autonomy. Contrary to conventional expectations that extensive civilian intervention undermines professionalism, this transformation recalibrated the balance between control and effectiveness under conditions of heightened internal and external threat. Methodologically, the study employs a qualitative historical analysis of Turkey’s civil–military relations from the early republican period through the post-2016 coup era. It synthesizes institutional reforms, legal changes, elite purges, and shifts in threat perception, drawing on secondary literature, legal texts, and security-sector analyses to trace how civilian authority over the military was consolidated. The paper finds that intensified civilian control, driven by both coup fears and regional security challenges, coincided with increased military effectiveness. Institutional reforms, counterbalancing strategies, and the restructuring of command and oversight mechanisms facilitated greater jointness, operational integration, and responsiveness to civilian directives. These changes contributed to the TAF’s improved performance in domestic counterinsurgency operations and in external theaters such as Syria, Libya, and the South Caucasus. The findings challenge Huntingtonian expectations regarding military autonomy and support arguments emphasizing the conditional benefits of civilian intervention under threat. By linking authoritarian consolidation, threat environments, and military performance, the paper contributes to broader debates on civil–military relations, democratic backsliding, and the trade-offs between civilian supremacy and military effectiveness in hybrid and authoritarian regimes.

Graham Backman, University of Massachusetts Amherst

The influence of anti-Latino implicit and explicit racial appeals in candidate evaluation

In *The Race Card* (2001) Tali Mendelberg argues that campaigns, given the prevalence and strength of the norm of racial equality, use implicit racial appeals about African Americans as a method to mobilize white voters. Since then, many scholars have experimentally tested Mendelberg’s theory concerning the impact of exposure to these messages with varied results (for review see Stephens-Dougan 2021). While these scholars have expanded our knowledge of the influence of racial appeals, few have examined whether the implicit or explicit messages that center Latinos or Latino identity have similar effects as appeals with African Americans. To fill this gap we leveraged data from an experiment imbedded in a national online survey of 1133 adults fielded by YouGov from May 31–June 8, 2023. We find that there are only marginal differences between non-racial, implicit, and explicit racial appeals with explicit appeals being the most effective at bolstering support, contrary to the assumptions of the norm of racial equality. We end with a discussion of what this means for the study of racial political communication and where the field could move from here.

Bree Bang-Jensen, University of Georgia

Breaking the Habit: Withdrawal from Drug Treaties

In recent years, a number of states have begun to challenge longstanding global drug control agreements by decriminalizing or legalizing substances such as cannabis. These shifts raise critical questions about how and why states exit international treaties. While existing research often treats treaty exit as a breakdown in commitment, this project argues that exit can also reflect evolving domestic values. I distinguish between two forms of treaty withdrawal: pragmatic exits, where states leave to avoid enforcement or reputational consequences, and principled exits, where states reject treaties due to normative or policy divergence. Using a pre-registered survey experiment, I investigate how individual trust in national institutions shapes support for each type of exit in the context of global drug treaties. I hypothesize that higher trust in domestic institutions increases support for principled exit while decreasing support for pragmatic exit.

Jason Barabas, Dartmouth College

What Must Aspiring Citizens Know? Civics Test Questions in the U.S. Immigration Naturalization Process

An informed citizenry is often considered essential for a functioning democracy. Toward this end, the U.S. Government requires all prospective citizens to pass a test demonstrating their knowledge of American history, government and civics. How should we evaluate what aspiring citizens know, and does civics knowledge shape attitudes? To answer these questions, we conducted two empirical studies using the actual USCIS tests for individuals wishing to become naturalized citizens in America. In the first study, we leveraged administrative changes relating to the content and format of the official USCIS citizenship tests. Specifically, we conducted a large (n>2,200) national survey experiment with randomly assigned questions from either the 2008 version crafted during the Obama Administration (using a pool of 100 possible questions) or the 2020 version from the first Trump Administration (a pool of 128 possible questions). We also explored variations in the length of the knowledge tests from each era (i.e., 10 vs. 20 questions). Overall, we found that subjects who answered questions from the 2020 version [i.e., Trump] performed significantly worse than those assigned to the 2008 format [Obama/Biden], and that performance declined even further for subjects assigned to the longer 2020 test. Subsequent analyses using item response models confirmed significant variation in civics test item difficulty and discrimination parameters; the tests differed, suggesting that what would-be citizens needed to know depended on the political era. In our second study, respondents answered questions drawn from the USCIS civics exam. Half of the national sample was given the correct answer to each question, correcting them if they were wrong. These newly informed respondents reported stronger anti-immigrant attitudes and policy preferences relative to respondents who were not treated. Taken together, the results show that variations in civics test instrumentation affects performance on citizenship tests and, to a lesser degree, political views.

Kayla Bartsch, Independent Researcher

“Necessary to Good Government and the Happiness of Mankind”: The Founders’ Vision of Public Education as a Solution to Faction

n/a

Alana Bauer, University of Vermont

Crisis of Rural Governance: A Comparative Analysis of Morocco and Senegal

Why do Morocco and Senegal—two predominantly Muslim, former French colonies in the Maghreb-Sahel region—exhibit such different models and outcomes of rural governance? This thesis investigates the institutional and historical roots of these differences, focusing on how governance structures shape legitimacy and performance in rural areas. While Morocco’s governance remains highly centralized under the makhzen, relying on direct state policing, Senegal employs a decentralized model in which traditional and religious leaders (marabouts). Furthermore, Afrobarometer data (R9, 2021/2023) reveal stark contrasts in institutional trust; 69.1% and 65.7% of rural Senegalese express high trust in traditional leaders and police, respectively, whereas in Morocco these percentages are only 7.5% and 35.4%. To explain this stark difference, this study combines Rational Choice Institutionalism with Historical Institutionalism. First, I will assess how institutional design influences rural governance legitimacy and performance. Then, I will trace the colonial and postcolonial history that produced divergent systems of authority in Senegal and Morocco. By linking institutional legacies to present-day trust, this research contributes to a broader debate on rural governance, legitimacy, and state-society relations in postcolonial Africa.

Zachary Baum, Rutgers University

When QTPOC Run, QTPOC Win: Intersectional Ambition and the Fight for State Legislative Power in America

Queer and Trans People of Color (QTPOC) are among the most marginalized communities in the United States and heavily excluded from elected office. Despite growing visibility and population growth, particularly among Generations Z and Alpha, only eleven QTPOC currently serve in state legislatures nationwide. The main question explored is: what systemic barriers limit descriptive representation of Queer and Trans People of Color (QTPOC) in State Legislatures in the United States? This paper examines the structural, institutional, socioeconomic, political, and cultural barriers that constrain QTPOC descriptive representation in state-level elected contexts. Drawing on data from the LGBTQ Victory Institute and the U.S. Transgender Survey (USTS), I conduct a quantitative media content analysis and qualitative analysis of campaign coverage, identify current levels of QTPOC representational disparity, explore party recruitment patterns, and examine the fundraising gap. Using three case studies of randomly selected QTPOC candidates for state legislative office from 1992 to 2024, I expect this analysis will demonstrate that QTPOC candidates confront intersecting systems of exclusion—limited socioeconomic capital, racialized and cisnormative gatekeeping in party networks, hostile electoral conditions, and biased media framing—that collectively diminish political efficacy and opportunity while maintaining deeply embedded systems of oppression. Integrating theories of intersectionality, procedural representation, and group consciousness, this study situates QTPOC within the broader race and ethnic politics literature to illustrate how descriptive representation remains structurally unattainable and at reach for QTPOC, who face “triple oppression”.

Sonu Bedi, Dartmouth College

Playing the Constitutional Game

This paper provides a novel way to understand the Constitution and its relationship to our two main political parties in the United States. It treats the Constitution as specifying the rules of the game (the arrangement and limits of public power) and our two political parties as seeking to win that game (to exercise as much of this power as possible). The Supreme Court’s role is to specify these rules, declare when said rules have been violated, and provide a remedy where appropriate. This constitutional game has been going on since *Marbury v. Madison* (1803) when the Court first established the exclusive power to police the game. The political parties have been playing this game ever since. This argument stands to make at least four contributions to the relationship between law and politics. First, this argument will treat political parties not as bugs but as features of our constitutional system where we’ve always had two primary players of the game. Second, this argument will treat the Supreme Court as a referee, where the Court tells us what these rules are and when they have been violated. I will argue that in the long-term, these rules are not about helping one player or the other. So even if a particular rule may immediately help one party does not mean that it won’t help the other years later. Third, this argument will reveal that the rules of the constitutional game are set up to advance the interests of both the American people and the states. The fact the Constitution has two stakeholders that must be balanced illuminates why we sometimes see internal disagreement on the Court. Fourth, this argument will allow us to distinguish the law (the rules of the game) from politics (how the game is played).

John Berg, Suffolk University

What's Up with the Democratic Party?

On one hand, Democratic Party candidates have been winning elections in 2025; on the other hand, increasing numbers of voters (and nonvoters) express disapproval of the Democratic Party. One can think of two possible explanations for this paradox, Either the party has moved too far to the left, and too preoccupied with the rights of transgender people and other minorities, and has lost voters despite the declining popularity of the Republicans; or else the national party leadership, in the form of the Democratic National Committee, the Democratic Congressional leadership, and the Democratic Congressional campaign committees, has too frequently failed to find ways to oppose the Trump program effectively. Different groups within the Democratic Party (Blue Dog Democrats, Justice Democrats, Our Revolution, Indivisible, etc.) have adopted one or the other of these arguments. This paper will attempt to sort out the strategy and tactics of these groups and their likely impact on the 2026 Congressional elections.

Kimberly Bergendahl, University of Connecticut

Is Good Government a Good Idea? Municipal Responses to Ethics Reform in Connecticut

Prompted by the political scandals of the Rowland Administration, the Connecticut General Assembly passed Public Act 05-183, which created the Office of State Ethics- an independent regulatory division of the Office of Governmental Accountability. This legislation strengthened existing codes of conduct for state employees by reorganizing and expanding the former State Ethics Commission. Despite this successful effort in 2005, Connecticut's 169 municipalities have responded in different ways. Some have maintained their existing ethics commissions, others have established new ones, and many have opted to forgo them entirely. Most recently, for example, voters overwhelmingly rejected a resolution to establish an ethics commission in the Town of Pomfret. These developments raise an important question: Why do voters reject proposals for "good government," even in a state where ethics reforms have enjoyed considerable success? Building on research first presented in 2018, this current project draws on data from all 169 municipalities in Connecticut. Using both quantitative and qualitative methods, this work identifies the factors that predict whether municipalities choose to adopt ethics codes and evaluates the effectiveness of those codes where they exist.

Lauren Blois, Saint Anselm College

Let's Talk Politics: Exposure to Political Social Media Content

The common wisdom is that social media echo chambers are making young people less willing to engage in conversations about politics. If true, this has potentially serious consequences for the future of our democracy. What is the effect of exposure to political social media content on users' engagement in political conversations and their willingness to engage? Existing research does not provide a satisfactory answer to this question. I surveyed 287 undergraduate students using a voluntary response sample and analyzed the results using OLS regression analysis. I hypothesized that social media users who see a majority of content affirming their political ideology are less likely to have engaged in an in-person political conversation and are more willing to talk about politics with someone who has a similar political ideology. I assumed those who see a majority of unaffirming content are more likely to have engaged in in-person political conversations and are more willing to have such conversations with someone who has a different political ideology. Two of my hypotheses were supported by the data. I found that regardless of exposure to affirming or unaffirming content, users tend to have in-person political conversations, mostly with people who have a similar political ideology. Further research should test these hypotheses on more representative samples. These findings fill a gap in the literature about social media and political discourse and suggest that further theorizing is needed to understand these topics.

Jacob Boros, Saint Vincent College

Education for Ecological Citizenship: Aldo Leopold on Reading Land

In his famous book *A Sand County Almanac*, as well as in his other writings, the American conservationist and nature writer Aldo Leopold makes multiple references to the act of "reading land" and the notion that land provides a "liberal education." He also indicates that this study makes Americans better citizens because it encourages certain virtues that republican, self-governing citizens ought to possess. This paper attempts to make sense of what Leopold means in employing these phrases and themes by posing four questions. First, what does Leopold mean by "the land?" Second, what does he mean when he says that land may be "read?" Third, in what sense is reading land a "liberal" art? Fourth, how does Leopold envision this so-called liberal education informing civic education and thereby having political implications? In answering these questions, I will assess how the sort of study Leopold proposes might contribute to a more robust notion of liberal education and civic education, and the interplay between them. My tentative argument is that Leopold provides a roadmap for integrating ecology into these forms of education, which in turn can elevate the character of both. In this 250th year of the United States' existence, as discussions of how to learn about, and teach about, America take on particularly deep significance, I propose that Leopold's ecological approach fills an important space in the stories Americans tell about themselves.

Ebenezer Nana Botsio, Utah State University

Great Power Competition In Africa: US Aid Responses To Chinese Aid And Investment

This thesis examines how the United States responds to China's increase in aid and FDI in Africa in the broader context of great power competition. I argue that China's engagement in the region causes a decline in America's leverage, thus compelling it to restructure or increase aid allocation. Specifically, Chinese sectoral activity leads to the reallocation of U.S. aid to the same sectors, state-to-state lending by China causes the U.S. to adopt bypass strategies that channel aid through civil society and non-state actors, and finally, China's diplomatic gains in international forums lead the U.S. to increase aid. Using data from AidData and OECD-DAC, the thesis conducts a cross-national quantitative analysis at the country-sector level from 2000 to 2022. The study will consider aid not just as a form of altruism or development but rather as a geopolitical instrument formed and shaped by the interests of senders, the characteristics of recipients, and—as a strikingly understudied perspective—the rivalry of extra-regional great powers.

Patrick Bratton, United States Army War College

Imagining the Future of War: KM Panikkar's Strategic Thinking

In the 1940s *Indian Historian and Administration*, KM Panikkar, offered a unique Indian and post-colonial approach to strategy and warfare. Writing in wide variety of venues, like *Foreign Affairs*, *International Affairs*, and *India Quarterly*, he offered to both the West/Global North and India a distinctly Indian perspective on how colonialism and the Second World War changed the character of war. He examined the importance of sea power, how technology changed geography, and the impact of nationalism and self-determination on strategic planning. This paper examines Panikkar's important writings and presentations in the 1940s and 50s to give a fuller picture of non-Western approaches to war and strategy during an age of great transition.

Beau Breslin, Skidmore College

The Edit that Still Haunts America

Thomas Jefferson didn't put up a fight. The principal author of the Declaration of Independence was miffed at the edits proposed by the Second Continental Congress. But he did not protest. Perhaps his deference came as a result of his famously introverted personality. He was no Adams. Or perhaps he subscribed to the principle that it was unseemly to defend one's own draft. Either way, he stood stoic as the delegates "mangled" his masterpiece. It was July, 1776. The Congress had formally received Jefferson's draft on June 28th. The full body would spend parts of the next several days modifying passages and redacting sections. Jefferson's preference for men being endowed with "inherent and inalienable rights" was changed to "certain unalienable Rights." The word "expunge" was replaced with the word "alter." "Expunge" just seemed too dramatic—too hostile—for a group of nervous colonial lawmakers. One redaction felt personal, though. It involved the last grievance levelled at King George III: the one regarding slavery. My paper tells the story of that famous redaction and how the edit still haunts America today. I am fascinated by the project of trading or eliminating words, and thus altering the meaning of America's birth certificates. When Gouverneur Morris rewrote the Preamble to America's Constitution, he set off a revolution. When the clause protecting religious freedom in John Dickinson's sketch of the Articles of Confederation was revised because he had the courage to include women as beneficiaries, America's struggle to achieve gender equality got off to a false start. And when the slavery passage in Thomas Jefferson's original draft Declaration of Independence was redacted because some feared southern opposition to the independence movement, the country's most famous declaratory statement was forever altered and the shame of slavery became fully ours. These edits changed history.

Dave Bridge, Baylor University

Donald Trump's 2016 List of Supreme Court Nominees

This paper discusses the implications and lessons learned from Donald Trump's 2016 decision to release a "definitive" list of possible Supreme Court nominees. Although not sufficient for his upset victory over Hillary Clinton, the list was necessary, as it helped overcome Christian Conservatives' concerns over a New York playboy who had previously expressed unequivocal pro-choice statements. With assistance from the Federalist Society, the list helped wed the Religious Right to Trump's candidacy. When Trump unexpectedly won, he followed through on his promise and chose from the list. The nominees, of course, have changed the course of American jurisprudence. But the development of Trump's list tells us more than just that conservative Justices vote conservatively. The episode provides insight into Trump, the presidency, the Court as an institution, and the nature of American political parties.

Michelle Brophy-Baermann, Rhode Island College

Democracy Dies in Broad Daylight

On January 7th, 2026, ICE agent Jonathon Ross shot and killed Renee Good in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Americans agree on that fact, but not on what it means. Some believe Good was murdered while trying to drive away; others believe she caused her own death by disobeying orders or trying to run Ross over. Interpretations largely depend on where people get their news. Several bystander videos of the shooting appeared on social media that day, allowing anyone to view the incident directly. Yet politicians, pundits, and influencers quickly offered competing narratives. Two days later, a conservative website released Ross's cell-phone video, which the DHS amplified online. The administration and Fox News used this footage to argue that Ross feared for his life, while the New York Times and Washington Post contended that Good was attempting to drive away. These dueling narratives gave a polarized public the "evidence" each side needed to confirm what it already believed. The Good shooting exemplifies how a fragmented, polarized media system can turn a single, well-documented event into competing realities. When outlets interpret the same evidence in ways that reinforce partisan identities and delegitimize critics, they erode shared facts, weaken trust in institutions, normalize attacks on democratic oversight, and contribute to democratic backsliding. This paper examines that connection between media and democratic backsliding. Using content analysis, it compares coverage by selected outlets (Fox News, MSNBC, CNN, the Times, WaPo, NPR/PBS, and one social media platform) of three kinds of events in 2017 and 2025: executive immigration actions, attacks on the press, and political protest. A coding scheme assesses tone toward presidential actions, frames of institutional legitimacy, fear-based rhetoric, treatment of attacks on the media, and references to democracy or authoritarianism, to show how these outlets frame executive power, institutions, and opposition across Trump's two terms.

Manuela Brunner, University at Albany, SUNY

Pre-trial incarceration and the Chilean criminal justice reform

In the 1990s and early 2000s, Latin America underwent a large legal reform movement known as the Latin American Criminal Procedure Revolution. In a period of 15 years, 14 countries changed their criminal justice legislation and adopted an adversarial model of criminal proceedings (Langer, 2007; Zorro Medina, 2020). As a part of this movement, Chile completely overhauled its criminal judicial system, having as one of the central goals to reduce the number and proportion of individuals incarcerated before their conviction. Twenty-five years have passed since the first regional implementation of the reform in the country, but there has been little empirical evidence showing if the reform achieved its intended goal; there is even less evidence about the duration of these effects. Using official data from Gendarmeria (prison service), Carabineros (national police), and the National Institute of Statistic, this presentation will explore the effects of the reform in pre-conviction incarceration at a regional level. Preliminary results will be presented, showing the distinct effects of the reform across Chilean regions and the changes of the effect size throughout the years. Potential underlying mechanisms for future research will also be discussed. Through the use of Chile as a case study, the proposed presentation aims to discuss the effects of large-scale legislation changes over time, further advancing the knowledge on the impact of criminal reforms.

Kevin Buterbaugh, Southern Connecticut State University

Partisanship, Gender and Ambassadorial Placement: How the party affiliation of the president affects where men and women are appointed as ambassadors.

This paper examines whether the party affiliation affects where men and women are appointed as US ambassadors. We use a data set covering the presidential administrations from George H W Bush to Donald Trump in our examination. In particular, we examine whether the power of the country, its standard of living, its level of democracy and political stability are associated with who a president picks for an ambassadorial posting. We expect that ideological differences and views on gender between the parties will lead to significant differences.

Courtney Butts, Providence College

Migrants in Media: A Tri-National Study of the United States, Trinidad & Tobago, and Mexico

Scholars have studied extensively media portrayals of immigrants in the United States. However, less scholarly attention has addressed how countries—particularly Trinidad & Tobago and Mexico—frame and portray Venezuelan immigrants in their news coverage. Arguably, a media narrative of immigrants significantly shapes understanding and influence on policy outcomes and political rhetoric, and so this gap in research is significant. Through a tri-national comparison of the U.S., Trinidad & Tobago and Mexico, this study examines how narratives of Venezuelan immigrants are depicted in major news sources and explores how this media dynamic aligns or challenges political discourse and government policy. As such, this research investigates media similarities and differences in media portrayals, political discourse and policy decisions across three countries and how these elements shape public opinion. Importantly, these countries experience migration differently: the U.S. is a large receiving state in a Northern region; while Trinidad & Tobago is a small receiving state—and closest to Venezuela; and Mexico is both a receiving and transit state for immigrants. Methodologically, this study utilizes various national media sources, and a coding system is applied based on three analytical lenses: national security threat, humanitarian issues, and neglected crisis. This investigation is important as each country addresses and frames immigration differently, especially factoring in geographical location, country size, and whether the state is a receiving or transit state. This study aims to address how these various factors influence how a state builds immigrant narratives, and its larger impacts on political rhetoric and policy outcomes.

Alexandra Buzzini, Yale University

Godly Populists: Redemption and Retribution in Puritan Political Thought

Though the New England Puritans are popularly remembered as little more than authoritarian theocrats, political theorists have challenged this view in recent years by drawing attention to both the proto-liberal and civic republican elements of their thought. Still, the populist impulses within New England Puritan political thought have been overlooked. In this paper, I argue that the unique instincts of Puritan populism could provide important resources for navigating the clash between political elites and the public in today's America. To do this, I examine a group of radical Puritan democrats who defended and mobilized the laity's moral judgement to counteract the ministerial elite. In their view, the paternalistic rule of well-meaning officials like John Winthrop and Cotton Mather attempted to usurp their congregational system of government. Still, these democratic reformers reconciled apparently divisive government reform strategies—like audits, impeachment, and public trial of elites—with their advocacy for citizenship ethics of love, grace, and forgiveness. I argue that their democratic commitments and rigorous theological ethics led them to theorize a form of “loyal opposition” between the laity and their leaders, which sought personal redemption alongside institutional reform and political retribution. In doing so, this unique kind of theologically-inflected populism counterintuitively cultivated wariness of demagogues and the whims of popular passions. By understanding their attempts at solving these paradoxes, I suggest that these thinkers could offer a model for approaching government reform in contemporary politics. As tides of religious fervor and reformism rise on the American right, these predecessors could help us better understand and respond to calls for accountability and moral purity in an increasingly pluralistic society.

Anne Marie Cammisa, Georgetown University

Advocating for the Arts in Congress

Given the increased attention on the often-conflictual relationship between government and the arts, it is a good time to examine the interaction between the arts advocacy groups and Congress. Who is involved in arts advocacy? What are the major organizations? With whom do they interact in Congress—individuals, committees, subcommittees? What is the history of arts advocacy? What successes failures have the arts lobby experienced? How has its relationship with Congress changed during the Trump administration? What does the future hold for arts advocacy? Drawing on journalistic accounts, interviews and the existing literature on arts advocacy, this paper will attempt to answer those questions, and (excuse the pun) paint a picture of the current landscape.

Ayelet Carmeli, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

The Origins of Financial Citizenship: Savings Banks, Thrift, and State-Building in Nineteenth-Century United States

How were working-class Americans first integrated into the financial system? This chapter traces the rise of savings banks in early 19th-century Northeast U.S., established by social reformers to encourage thrift among the working poor. These institutions offered safe, interest-bearing accounts to promote self-help and reduce reliance on poor relief. I follow their development and state endorsement through special charters and regulation, culminating in the Reconstruction-era Freedman’s Savings Bank—a project that extended saving opportunities to the formerly enslaved but operated under far looser federal oversight than state-chartered mutual savings banks, leaving it vulnerable to mismanagement and collapse. By embedding savings within a broader project of moral reform, these institutions laid foundations for a welfare model based on conditional inclusion rather than redistribution . The paper develops the concept of “financial citizenship,” in which access to savings is framed as both a right and a duty, and shows how international and inter-state institutional diffusion shaped early U.S. state-building.

Andy Carr, New School for Social Research

Local Politics, Race, Rapid Transit: The Fall and (Partial) Restoration of Urban Rail Systems in Southeastern Virginia

While urban transportation systems in the United States are crucial subjects of study for fields like urban and regional planning, contemporary political science scholarship generally elides infrastructural concerns. Certainly, some have examined transit’s implications for municipal elections and referendum-voting patterns and, more recently, dynamic relations with housing and gentrification (see, e.g., Hess 2020; Schouten 2022; Singer 2025), as well as mobility, accessibility, and transportation justice more broadly (Horak 2025; Karner and Shuster 2025). With some exceptions (e.g., Nelles 2013), urban transit systems nevertheless remain under-theorized, too-seldom-explored as driving forces of local or regional political economies. This omission is striking: renascent “second-generation” light rail and streetcar systems of recent decades include expanded or entirely new systems from Seattle and Portland to Oklahoma City, Detroit, Atlanta, and Charlotte, among many others. This work-in-progress aims to chart a path forward for both theoretical and empirical work in this area, using case studies from the Hampton Roads region of southeastern Virginia. Three of the region’s extant cities—Hampton, Newport News, and Norfolk—developed elaborate, interlinked streetcar and intercity rail systems during the first few decades of the twentieth century. By the late 1950s, all had been dismantled; only some were replaced by longer-distance (but less-comprehensive) bus routes. Using archival records, Chamber of Commerce brochures, and local newspaper coverage to reconstruct the rise and fall of these mass-transit networks, I aim to show how racial politics and then-emergent Southern car culture were at least as influential to these events as subsequent development patterns as the mythologized General Motors “streetcar conspiracy.” In doing so, I also aim to show how midcentury transit-planning and urban development practices shaped the region’s political geography and demography – up to and including abortive efforts to develop new, second-generation light rail in these same central cities today.

Thomas Carty, Springfield College

Christian Zionism and Donald Trump's First Term, 2017-2021

Scholars and members of the general public alike have struggled to explain the powerful and enduring support Donald Trump has achieved among a substantial minority of U.S. voters. One theory suggests that these Americans appreciated Trump's appointment of the Supreme Court justices who voted to overturn *Roe vs. Wade*. Others believe that white supremacists and Christian nationalists recognize Trump as an unflinching fighter and defender of these causes. This paper, however, identifies another, underappreciated source of support for the 45th president of the United States. During Trump's first term, the administration gave unprecedented political backing to Christian Zionists, who pressured the U.S. government to favor an extended Israeli footprint in the Middle East. For much of American history, evangelicals have united behind those Israelis who asserted their government's right to possess all of Jerusalem and surrounding territory. In claiming divine sanction for the Christian colonization of the Americas and later Americans' westward expansion, American evangelicals perceived parallels in the Jewish settlement of lands referenced in Hebrew and Christian sacred scripture. Since the late 1960s, Protestant pastors Billy Graham and John Hagee gained widespread support for the idea that Israel's survival and prosperity amidst a region of hostile nations served as evidence of "biblical prophetic truth." Following the lead of Christian Zionists, the Trump administration actively endorsed Israel's right to possess all of Jerusalem and territories beyond those granted to the Jewish state by the United Nations. As a result, this paper argues that President Trump's Middle East policy represents his most significant and enduring foreign policy legacy.

Camila Castro, University at Albany, SUNY

Judicial Impacts of 'Operação Acolhida' (Operation Welcome): The role of Legal Decision-Making in Brazil in Humanitarian Actions

Venezuela's prolonged economic collapse, characterized by hyperinflation, political repression, and the collapse of basic services, has triggered one of the largest displacement crises in the world. By March 2023, over 7 million Venezuelans had fled their country, seeking refuge primarily in neighboring countries such as Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Chile, and Brazil. In response to the growing influx of Venezuelan nationals across its northern border, Brazil launched *Operação Acolhida* ("Operation Welcome") in April 2018—an inter-institutional humanitarian effort led by the federal government to coordinate reception, shelter, and relocation of forcibly displaced persons. While the operation has been praised internationally for its scope and coordination, far less attention has been given to the role of the Brazilian Federal Judiciary in enforcing the legal rights and basic protections owed to refugees under domestic and international law. This paper critically examines the Judiciary's performance in this context by analyzing two key judicial decisions that address legal disputes related to Operation Welcome. The findings reveal that the Brazilian Federal Judiciary has fallen short of its constitutional mandate by failing to act with urgency, relying on procedural formalism, and avoiding substantive rulings. Through these omissions and delays, the courts have weakened refugee protection and failed to deliver justice to those most in need.

Michael Catalano, University of Scranton

Veteran Status of US District Judges and Presidential Power

Does serving in the military influence judicial behavior? This paper argues that past service in the military instills a heightened obedience to the President as commander-in-chief. This obedience lingers for veterans who become US District Court judges. Those judges who are also veterans should uphold and expand presidential powers when such cases come before them. In other words, the President is commander in chief and head of military. Judges who are veterans internalize that hierarchical relationship and use it as a cue when judging in cases involving presidential executive orders. I test my theory using how individual judges vote/rule in cases where a presidential executive order is challenged, where they vote to uphold or overturn the executive action. This paper is a replication and extension of Campbell, Tom, and Nathaniel Wilcox. 2020. "Younger Federal District Court Judges Favor Presidential Power." *Journal of Law and Economics* 63(February): 181-202.

Cora Caton, University of Maine

Economic Anxiety without Coalitions: Artificial Intelligence and Distributional Politics

Classic IPE theories explain support for globalization by linking material exposure to economic shocks to stable distributional coalitions. The proliferation of artificial intelligence (AI) poses challenges similar to globalization shocks for coalition formation and governance, but its economic effects are uncertain and contested, complicating the translation of perceived economic risk into coherent political preferences. This paper argues that perceived job risk from AI, rather than objective exposure alone, shapes political responses to AI, but that this mechanism is systematically conditioned by partisan and ideological alignments, producing different patterns of coalition forming than classic IPE models might expect. To evaluate this argument, the study draws on an original survey experiment to examine how individuals respond to different framings of AI usage by multinational corporations: labor displacement, intellectual property concerns, environmental concerns, and accessibility benefits. Outcomes include political consumer behavior and support for domestic and international AI regulation. Experimental ordering manipulation assesses whether economic risk operates as a stable predisposition or is activated by moral framing. The paper advances two primary expectations. First, individuals who perceive AI as a threat to employment should exhibit greater support for regulatory intervention and constraints on corporate AI usage. Second, and more importantly, this relationship should be moderated by political ideology. I expect that among liberals, perceived job risk will interact with competing moral interpretations of AI's consequences present in the experimental conditions, producing fragmented and issue-specific political responses. Among conservatives, perceived job risk will produce more uniform reactions across conditions, reflecting a more consolidated ideological structure. Taken together, this project contributes to international political economy by clarifying how an economic shock with global reach can generate political dynamics that diverge from those predicted by classic models of preference formation in IPE, helping to explain the domestic constraints facing emerging concerns for international economic governance.

Stefanie Chambers, Trinity College

Navigating the Politics of Scarcity: Early Findings From a Multi-Site Study of School Closure in the US

As declining enrollment forces districts nationwide to consider school consolidation, questions emerge about how communities navigate closure decisions amid heightened political polarization and resource constraints. While most school closure research focuses on urban contexts and student outcomes (Ewing & Green, 2022), this study addresses critical gaps by examining stakeholder experiences across diverse settings and exploring the politics of closure as it unfolds in real time. Over the last year, we conducted 40 semi-structured interviews with school board members, principals, teachers, and community advocates across five districts representing different regions, political contexts, and demographic profiles. Our analysis reveals how school closure operates as a uniquely contentious political process that can both reflect and amplify existing community divisions. Our initial findings identify three key political dimensions of school closure. (I'm going out on a limb here. Need your help.) First, closure decisions expose and intensify pre-existing fault lines around race, class, and geography, with communities struggling to balance equity concerns against fiscal constraints. -Second, the politics of closure are shaped by competing narratives about what schools represent - neighborhood anchors, a pathway to the middle class for employees, political / economic investments, or expendable infrastructure. -Third, we find that procedural politics matter enormously: districts that engaged communities early, transparently shared data, and created meaningful opportunities for input experienced somewhat less contentious processes, though not necessarily different outcomes. These findings suggest that school closure represents not merely a technical response to enrollment decline but a democratic process through which communities negotiate fundamental questions about public goods, belonging, and sacrifice. As more districts confront closure decisions in the post-pandemic era, understanding the political dynamics that shape these processes becomes essential for policy-makers, practitioners, and communities seeking to navigate scarcity while preserving schools' potential to unite rather than divide.

Daniel Chand, Kent State University

Retributive Enforcement and Uncooperative Federalism: Is ICE Targeting Sanctuary Jurisdictions?

During the growth of Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Secure Communities (S-Comm) program, many law enforcement agencies adopted so-called "sanctuary" policies, limiting cooperation with ICE to enforce federal immigration policies. In response, ICE and the Trump administration declared that federal agents would "end" sanctuary communities. This study examines the relationship between federal immigration enforcement and local sanctuary policies. We examine whether ICE increased its direct enforcement activities (known as "community arrests") in sanctuary communities, examining enforcement through fiscal years 2015-2018, over both the Obama and Trump administrations. Our analysis finds that ICE did, indeed, significantly increase community arrests in sanctuary communities. We also find a significant uptick all ICE enforcement actions – both arrests and removals – when Trump takes office. These findings add to the growing literature on uncooperative federalism, exploring to what extent state and local governments can resist federal policy initiatives (e.g., Bulman-Pozen and Gerken 2009).

Jonathan Chausovsky, SUNY Fredonia

A Coasean Theory of Corporate Charter Law

The Coase Theorem is among the best known and most cited concepts in law and economics. Two central claims have predominated the discussion. First, in the absence of transaction costs individuals have an incentive to make voluntary exchanges that maximize the overall production. This is the efficiency principle. Second, under that same assumption the assignment of legal rights and responsibilities will not alter the total amount of value created. This is the invariance principle. One argument that follows is the government rule cannot change the overall outcome. Despite the wealth of attention an issue that remains unstated and (remarkably) unexplored. How does a government grant of charter rights affect the invariance argument? Charter grants can be treated as contractual agreements between firms and the government. That agreement allows a corporation to come into legal existence, with standing in courts of law. In the abstract world of zero transaction cost, corporations can be assumed away, because actors would make any needed exchanges costlessly. But they do exist in the real world, and so I propose relaxing zero transaction costs assumption enough to provide for charter laws and their attendant rights. Coase elsewhere develops a theory of the firm that is based on its capacity to reduce transaction costs. Charter law gives incorporated firms advantages over those that are not. When incorporations are facilitated via government authority, efficiencies can follow. Under these assumptions, government laws do impact overall social output, and thus present a challenge to the efficiency and invariance principles.

Sophie Chin, Simmons University

The Uncomfortable Question: Addressing Sexual Violence Through a Prison Abolitionist Framework

Whenever the idea of prison abolition — the dissolution of the carceral system — is discussed, whether in academia or in casual conversation, there is one quintessential question asked by skeptics: "So what happens to the rapists and the abusers?" In other words, what is the solution presented by prison abolitionists to resolve the existence of perpetrators of sexual violence? Sympathy for nonviolent offenders of crime is easier to generate, relying heavily on the usage of the word "nonviolent" to argue that these prisoners do not present a danger to society and thus do not deserve to be locked up. However, when it comes to individuals that do pose a threat, the concept of removing prisons evokes a knee-jerk, visceral reaction of fear and anger. This paper seeks to challenge that reaction by asking an equally uncomfortable question in response: "Is sexual violence prevented, eliminated, or resolved by 'what happens' currently to the rapists and the abusers?" Recognizing the harms of the current system addressing sexual abuse allows abolitionists to produce several alternatives to prison that will provide both a more effective and more restorative experience to victims of that abuse.

Nutsa Chinchilakashvili, Simmons University

"Challenging the Multiple Streams Framework in the Contemporary Context of Institutional Friction."

Policymaking occurs in complex and unpredictable ways. Scholars are often prompted to examine why only a limited fraction of policy proposals gets adopted. This essay offers a comparative analysis of the Multiple Streams Framework (MSF) and Punctuated Equilibrium Theory (PET), evaluating both in the contemporary context of institutional friction. While MSF positions problem, policy, and political streams as relatively independent forces that must align to create an "opportunity window," PET situates policy change within broader institutional dynamics characterized by friction, bounded rationality, and the uneven distribution of power. By describing policymaking as long periods of stability punctuated by sudden, large-scale shifts, PET provides more coherent reasoning for why progressive policy changes remain rare. Drawing on the theoretical assumptions of both frameworks, alongside recent policy decisions in the United States, the paper argues that PET is more equipped to capture the historical and institutional conditions, as well as the overall trends and patterns of policy change.

Min Hyun Abbey Cho, New York University

A Cross-National Analysis of Climate-Induced Migration and Political Instability

This study analyzes whether political unrest in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) between 2000 and 2023 is amplified by displacement caused by hydrometeorological hazards (for example, floods, cyclones, droughts) and the extent to which this relationship is mediated by state institutions. Consolidating IDMC displacement data across-validated with EM-DAT hazard type, ACLED/UCDP unrest events, and World Bank governance indicators to create an annual country-year panel of 50 LMICs. To sharpen causal interpretation, I: (i) limit the primary measure of interest to hydrometeorological hazards and consider earthquakes and volcanoes as negative controls; (ii) use Poisson pseudo-maximum likelihood (PPML) with country/year fixed effects and population offset; (iii) instrumental displacement with exogenous weather shocks (SPEI/PDSI drought anomalies and cyclone-wind-track exposure); and (iv) include country-specific linear time trends. It was found that climate-related displacement strongly forecasts increased unrest the next year, and it is, to a greater extent, countered by stronger institutions. The results are robust to alternative codings, outlier diagnostics, placebo tests, and bounds on unobserved confounding. Comparative examples in Nigeria and Bangladesh are consistent with cross-national results: comparable exposure, mobilization results in different outcomes: Bangladesh was successful because of its institutional capacity. This paper highlights the importance of the management of climate risks as an integrated part of the governance reform rather than as a special humanitarian intervention.

Yujin Choi, University of Vermont

Individual Autonomy: A Western Parochial Value?

This paper engages with Confucian communitarian arguments that liberal democracy and human rights, when grounded in individual autonomy, conflict with the collective self-determination of East Asian societies (Bell 1993, 2006; Chan 2014; Kim 2016). On this view, autonomy is cast as a parochial Western value with only instrumental significance in East Asian democracies. I argue, however, that this literature conflates autonomy with individual sovereignty, exaggerating unencumbered agency as its central element. This overlooks feminist accounts of relational autonomy, which emphasize the social embeddedness, situatedness, and intersubjectivity of agency (Meyers 1989, 2000; Christman 2009; Nedelsky 2011). More specifically, while I acknowledge that strong substantive conceptions of relational autonomy (Oshana 2006, 2014, 2015) can revert to old-style individualism and remain vulnerable to Confucian critiques, I contend that dialogical conceptions, which define autonomy as a capacity to speak for oneself in response to potential criticisms within interpersonal relationships (Westlund 2003, 2009; Benson 2005a, 2005b), address most Confucian communitarian concerns. On this basis, I argue that an autonomy-based liberalism need not be incompatible with East Asian collective self-determination, so long as it is grounded in citizens' relational autonomy. I illustrate this claim with examples from recent South Korean feminist movements.

Kristina Clarke, Southern Connecticut State University

Patterns of Anarchist Organizing and Burnout: 2015-2025

Anarchists (also known as libertarian socialists, anarcho-communists, and antifascists, among other names, accurate or otherwise) have been historically consistent participants in social justice organizing in the United States within the last century. Within the last decade, however, anarchists have been involved in arguably more than their classic counterparts: navigating multiple efforts to curb rising authoritarianism in a more disconnected and complex social landscape than at the turn of the 20th century. On the heels of Occupy Wall Street in 2011, 2015 brought a new wave of social movements. Anarchists mobilized against police violence, the curtailing of reproductive rights, the separation of immigrant families, the increase in anti-LGBTQIA legislation, environmental destruction of indigenous lands, the genocide in Palestine, and more. The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 shifted how anarchists organized in their communities and added another layer of mutual aid work to an increasingly exhausted population of organizers. Through surveying experienced anarchist organizers, this paper explores their possible burnout after the height of COVID-19, defined by lower rates of organizing, self-perceived less effective organizing, and emotional exhaustion of political burnout. This study seeks to document the changing landscape of anarchist organizing in the U.S. within the last decade, drawing on any departures from previously documented work by scholars on anarchism and social movement theory.

Stevent Cleto Garcia, University of Rhode Island

Capital Projects vs. Community Needs: Participation, Power, and Institutional Design in Rhode Island Capital Planning

Local governments continually navigate the tension between economic growth and community well-being. This capstone uses a qualitative comparative case study to analyze how the Rhode Island municipalities of Providence, Pawtucket, and Central Falls incorporated community input in capital investment decisions. Focusing on three projects, the I-195 Redevelopment District, the Tidewater Landing soccer stadium, and the Central Falls High School reconstruction, the study explores how institutional structures, fiscal constraints, and political influences shape public engagement. The research uses only public records, meeting transcripts, policy reports, and media coverage, thereby avoiding IRB requirements. By examining Rhode Island's unique blend of small-scale governance and strong civic participation, this study aims to uncover whether public input mechanisms genuinely reflect residents' priorities or primarily serve elite economic interests. The findings contribute to strengthening community-centered capital planning and democratic accountability in local government. The analysis employs a comparative policy process framework to identify where participatory intent aligns or diverges from fiscal and political realities.

Rachael Cobb, Suffolk University

From Classroom to Polling Place: The Role of Poll Worker Experience in Civic Attitudes

This study explores the impact of serving as a poll worker on youth development and future electoral participation. It focuses on how early involvement in the electoral process can shape civic attitudes, skills, and long-term engagement in democratic activities among young individuals. The research surveyed former students, distinguishing between a control group who had not taken an upper-level voting rights course and a treatment group required to serve as poll workers. Poll workers play a critical role in the democratic process, ensuring the smooth implementation of elections by verifying voter eligibility, providing accommodations, and assisting voters with various logistical challenges. Despite their significant responsibilities, there is a surprising lack of understanding among social scientists regarding the backgrounds and motivations of poll workers. In this original study, data from 300 students were analyzed, testing hypotheses related to recruitment pathways for poll workers. The findings illustrate that experienced poll workers are more often recruited through personal means, such as direct outreach, while new poll workers frequently discover opportunities via impersonal channels, including media and official communications.

Greg Collins, Yale University

Alexander Crummell on the Social Principle, Racial Pride, and Civil Society

This is a draft of chapter 9 of my book manuscript on the idea of civil society in early black political thought, featuring Alexander Crummell's insights into the art of association. This art, for Crummell, was indispensable not only for racial uplift but also for Black nationalism and the diffusion of Christianity to the multitudes. In an age when post-Reconstruction America was growing increasingly secular, the distinctive feature of Crummell's thought on civil society was its painting of an early and formative conception of Black nationalism grounded in self-help and pan-African racial solidarity informed by evangelical Protestantism. Civil society was not only compatible with nationalism and religion; it was a lucid expression of these indomitable forces of Black social life, led by the providential hand of God.

Paul Collins, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Bias and the Public's Assessment of Supreme Court Appointments

The appointment of a U.S. Supreme Court justice is one of the most high profile and contentious events in all of American politics. Recent research indicates that women and people of color are subjected to bias and discrimination on their paths to the Court, including in their confirmation hearings. Yet, little is known about the consequences of this discrimination on public attitudes. Using new data from a preregistered national survey experiment, we examine two outcomes: perceptions of a nominee's qualifications relative to recent Supreme Court nominees, and approval of the nominee's appointment. Preliminary results reveal that group biases (race, partisanship) affect both how people judge a nominee's competence and whether they extend that evaluation into broader approval of the appointment. We also observe a strong bias contagion effect, where a third party's biased behavior toward a nominee successfully transmits to certain members of the observing public. While respondents who share racial or partisan group status with the nominee are generally resistant to that external signal, the original bias often proves contagious to those from other groups—i.e., white and different-party respondents. Viewed together, these findings indicate that biased political behavior can shape both perceived qualifications and political acceptance, with powerful and far-reaching implications.

John Colman, Ave Maria University

Montaigne's Discovery of Ancient Exotericism

Michele de Montaigne's life was marked by religious sectarian conflict. The religious intolerance of his age he claims was in some measure fueled the scholastic corruption of philosophy. The theological capture and transformation of philosophy into the scaffolding for religious dogmatism Montaigne seeks to undo by reviving the Socratic idea of philosophy as a way of life. In the "Apology for Raymond Sebond" Montaigne argues that the principal error of the scholastics was a failure to read the ancient texts with sufficient attention and care. What the scholastics failed to see (or simply ignored given its incompatibility with their theological purposes) was the way the ancients wrote. The scholastics misunderstood Aristotle's purposes as the development of a philosophic system, but as Montaigne argues, while Aristotle may be the "prince of the dogmatists... we see him often deliberately covering himself with such thick and inextricable obscurity that we cannot pick out anything of his opinion. It is in fact a Pyrrhonism in an affirmative form." Aristotle's exoteric manner of writing Montaigne later ascribes to nearly all the ancient philosophers. As he explains, "Some things they wrote for the needs of society, like their religions, and on that account, it was reasonable that they did not want to bear popular opinion to the skin, so as not to breed disorder and people's obedience to the laws and the customs of their country." By first disclosing ancient exotericism and then reviving the Socratic conception of philosophy as a way of life, Montaigne means to cast doubt upon the theological and metaphysical dogmatism that stands in the way of religious tolerance and free inquiry.

Shelby Cook Shannon, University at Albany, SUNY

The Public vs. The Publicly Poor: An Analysis of the Role of Public Space Regulation Ordinances in Social and Political Exclusion

Individuals and governments have long lamented the presence of the “other” and have established varied legislation to remove them from the public sphere. Ordinances that regulate who is allowed to rest on sidewalks, in doorways, or around other public facilities are colloquially called sit-lie ordinances, or SLO’s, and are traditionally implemented at the municipal level via code amendments. Research suggests that these policies and accompanying sweeps may have long-term negative consequences for those affected, so, why use them? This paper argues that the answer lies in our social and political conception of the public: who is included and who is not, and what protections does that afford them? To illustrate the path that sit-lie ordinances have taken and the consequences therein since rising in prominence in the early 2000’s, this paper will examine SLO implementation in three cities experiencing housing crises on the West Coast: Los Angeles, California, Grants Pass, Oregon, and Reno, Nevada. Sit-lie ordinances are a unique and important lens to analyze how social and academic conceptions of the public shape policy solutions and challenge the predominant belief that public spaces are entirely inclusive. Further, they reinforce and replicate the separation between the public and the publicly poor, making one definitionally separate from the other.

Alexandre Couture Gagnon, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

The end of the Gérin-Lajoie doctrine? Québec's relation with Texas

This paper focuses on the Québec-Texas relation. The Québec government has been doing foreign policy in the United States since the late 1960s. To justify having official relations with other countries or states, the Québec government has relied on the Gérin-Lajoie doctrine, which stipulates that Québec can have foreign policy in the fields of its constitutional competences. In Texas, however, the Québec government does not do cultural or educational agreements; it concentrates on economic relation. The success of the Québec-Texas relation is undeniable: Texas is Québec's main trading partner in the U.S. This paper will have two main impacts. From an empirical perspective, it will provide insights on the current status of Québec-Texas relation. From a theoretical perspective, this paper will contribute to the academic literature on paradiplomacy and regional studies.

Sharyl Cross, St. Edward's University

Shifting Geopolitical Competition Among Major Powers and the Issue of Reciprocal Risk over Critical Rare Earth Minerals

Despite initial optimistic forecasts following the end of the Cold War, major power competition is surging. Geopolitical risks and kinetic conflict continue to undermine stability across continents. Trade and commerce have been weaponized with the implementation of sanctions and reciprocal tariffs, supply chain disruptions and export restrictions. The contemporary global security and economic environment is undergoing a tectonic systemic transformation toward a multi-polar world system resulting in eroding stability of the rules based liberal international order. While rising nationalism and populism may prompt nations to seek insulation from the international economy, the reality is that our world society will remain highly interconnected with globalization continuing to evolve in complex circumstances of unbridled technological innovation, digitalization and weakening of multinational institutional structures. Managing access to critical rare earth mineral production and supply chains has moved to a central priority in global geopolitics. Rare earths are essential for maintaining technological and defense advantage and China’s monopoly over these critical resources will continue to figure significantly in relationships among major powers. This paper will examine the ways that reciprocal risks over the challenge of access to critical rare earth minerals characterizes major power competition in the contemporary and emerging global geopolitical environment. The issues of rare earth mineral access, production and supply are fraught with risk due to dependence on critical minerals supply chains. It is evident that major powers are likely to continue to use or exploit rare earths in geopolitical competition, bargaining and reprisals. This paper will explore frameworks from International Relations theory to potentially generate explanations and predictions with the aim of advancing academic research and policy formation on possible evolution and consequences for the role of rare earths in contemporary major power geopolitical competition.

Alejandro Cuadrado, Bowdoin College

Citizens of the Divided City: Dante's Concept of Diachronic Citizenship as a Remedy for Factionalism

In his *Divine Comedy*, Dante Alighieri offers a model of what I term diachronic citizenship: the relationship between two or more “fellow-citizens” whose lives did not overlap. For example, in *Purgatorio* 6, Dante stages an encounter between his guide Virgil and the medieval poet Sordello, two figures from the Italian city of Mantua. These two dead souls exhibit a transgenerational civic ethos prompted by the mere mention of a common homeland. Dante’s poem, I argue, offers a privileged site for the exploration of diachronic citizenship relationships, as the fictional journey to the afterlife allows for the meeting and fruitful recognition of fellow-citizens across history. Cities are, according to Dante, human institutions, and therefore subject to decay and eventual disappearance over time. Indeed, he believed that any human institution (a political regime, a religious order) soon declines from its foundational ideals. This decay can be seen through the rapid changing of “laws and coinage, offices / and customs” (*Purgatorio* 6.146-147). Nevertheless, even when a city has fully changed those things that makes it, in Aristotelian terms, a “constitution,” the possibility of diachronic citizenship remains. Despite the challenges inherent to the decline of human institutions, Dante provides the model of diachronic citizenship as a possible remedy to partisanship and polarization, by proposing that the rifts between contemporary political parties may be overcome by a greater commitment to the civic ideal that transcends the temporally specific trappings of a regime. If citizens were to see themselves as pertaining to the same institution as someone who lived centuries before (at a time when the city was itself an altogether different one), they may be more willing to overlook the differences that are at the root of factionalism.

Adam Cucchiara, United States Military Academy

Beyond Body Counts: Organizational Effectiveness During Rapid Security Expansion

Security agencies undergoing rapid expansion typically measure success through output metrics—total hires, arrests made, facilities opened—while systematically ignoring organizational capacity and institutional sustainability. This measurement gap enables political pressure for visible results to override capacity constraints, contributing to predictable organizational failures. Existing performance measurement frameworks (Sparrow 2015; Moore & Braga 2003; Behn 2003) emphasize what effective policing looks like under steady-state conditions but provide no guidance for assessing organizational health during periods of rapid workforce growth. This paper develops a multidimensional framework for measuring organizational effectiveness specifically during rapid security force expansion. Current metrics privilege short-term political visibility over long-term institutional capacity. These measurement choices systematically obscure the organizational strain that predicts effectiveness degradation—a critical gap when expansion speed itself creates performance risks. I propose four theoretically-grounded measurement dimensions that together provide early warning indicators of unsustainable expansion. First, Pipeline Capacity Utilization & Quality assesses whether talent development systems (recruiting, selection, training) operate within sustainable capacity limits or face quality-quantity tradeoffs. Second, Organizational Memory & Knowledge Transfer measures the organization’s ability to integrate new personnel and retain institutional knowledge through veteran-to-novice ratios, mentorship capacity, and supervision spans. Third, Institutional Capacity vs. Mission Demand distinguishes between activity levels and actual capacity to execute missions sustainably through indicators like administrative capacity strain and resource allocation volatility. Fourth, Performance Quality & Sustainability tracks whether expansion maintains or degrades operational effectiveness through cohort-specific error rates and process compliance metrics. These dimensions generate a diagnostic matrix identifying when organizations move from sustainable growth into strained or crisis conditions across multiple capacity indicators simultaneously. Using illustrative application to TSA’s 2001-2003 expansion and preliminary assessment of ICE’s current growth, I demonstrate how this framework would reveal organizational stress invisible in conventional output metrics.

Isabel Custodio, St. Edward's University

BRICS Reactions to African Conflict and the New Major Power Clash

This comparative research proposal investigates how and why the foreign policy responses of individual BRICS nations (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) to internal political conflicts in Africa converge or diverge, and what these patterns reveal about the nature of contemporary major power competition. Utilizing a Most Similar Systems Design (MSS-D), the study comparatively analyzes the reactions of China, Russia, India, and South Africa to the Sudan/Darfur Crisis and the Tigray Conflict in Ethiopia. Grounded in Neoclassical Realism (to assess national interest) and Social Constructivism/Role Theory (to analyze rhetoric versus reality), the analysis maps responses such as diplomatic engagement, arms sales, and non-interference adherence against specific independent variables like resource dependence and strategic rivalry with Western powers. The central argument is that while BRICS nations collectively utilize the rhetoric of South-South cooperation and anti-Western multilateralism for legitimization, their actual policy outputs are highly individualized, reflecting distinct, self-interested national priorities (e.g., China's economy, Russia's security). This divergence demonstrates that the emerging global order is characterized not by a coherent BRICS bloc, but by a form of strategic parallelism where major power competition is simultaneously pursued and masked by shared Global South identity claims.

Sebastian D'Amico, University of Vermont

The White Lotus and Attitudes about Wealth and Mean World Beliefs

The proposed paper will report on a study examining the relationship between exposure to the popular HBO show, *The White Lotus* (TWL), and attitudes regarding wealth and mean world beliefs. TWL follows the stories of wealthy vacationers and staff at luxurious resorts. The show's narratives highlight inequality in wealth and privilege. The characters are largely exploitive and untrustworthy. To assess the relationship between this content and audience's attitudes we designed the study with two different methods, one experimental the other correlational. Drawing on the literature on narrative transportation we designed the experiment to determine whether photos from *The White Lotus* could reevoke the show's themes to result in different responses to attitudes about the wealthy, money, economic mobility, and mean world beliefs. We designed the correlational study with relevant control variables and an interactive term to assess the relationships between exposure to the show as conditioned by respondents' level of transportability with the same variables. Additionally, we added attitudes regarding policies related to wealth, e.g., taxation and campaign finance laws, to the analysis. Research subjects were drawn from MTurk and supplemented with a convenience sample. The results of the experiment show that reevoking TWL themes through photos results in different attitudes about the wealthy, money, and mean world beliefs. The correlational study finds similar relationships as well as relationships between exposure to the show and attitudes about campaign finance laws and taxation for respondents who are more readily transported by narratives. The findings contribute more evidence to the growing literature on the political effects of entertainment media.

Anthony Dell'Aera, Worcester State University

Going Against the Flow: Anti-Fluoridation Water Policy in the City of Worcester, Massachusetts

This paper examines the public health impact of anti-fluoridation policy and why the anti-fluoridation movement has been successful in Massachusetts, with special attention given to the case study of Worcester. Fluoridation of community water was cited by the CDC as one of the ten most important public health breakthroughs in the twentieth century, reducing tooth decay by approximately 25% and significantly reducing the number of fillings, extractions, and oral procedures performed on children and adults. The safety and efficacy of community water fluoridation has been widely demonstrated, and it is recommended by nearly all public health, medical, and dental organizations including the American Dental Association, American Academy of Pediatrics, US Public Health Service, and World Health Organization. Yet, there is resistance to this practice, with opposition bearing many similarities to anti-vaccination and broader anti-science movements. Typically, decisions about water fluoridation are made at the local level. In Massachusetts, state law allows local boards of health to order water fluoridation but enables opponents to force a public referendum via petition. Despite the demonstrated public health benefits, over 150 cities and towns in the state have opted not to fluoridate their community water, and voters in 11 cities and towns actively rejected attempts by their local boards of health to fluoridate. Those declining fluoridation include some of the state's larger and poorer cities with diverse populations such as Worcester and Springfield, where access to dental care and oral hygiene products is lagging, with the impact particularly felt among communities of color. Attempts to adopt fluoridation policies in these communities have been met with resistance similar to that of anti-vaccination movements, but there are notable differences that add to our understanding of collective action movements and political ideology in Massachusetts.

Bradford Demarest, Saint Michael's College

The Emotional Framing of Social Capital in Political Speech: A Mixed Methods Analysis of Vermont Governor COVID-19 Press Conferences

This study seeks to determine whether and in what ways Vermont state leaders invoke different forms of social capital—linking, bridging, and bonding – in their formal communications with residents during the COVID-19 pandemic. To examine these research questions, we created an original dataset consisting of transcribed audio from Vermont governor COVID-19 press conferences from March 2020 to February 2022. We then analyzed the dataset using qualitative content analysis and computational tools, including the Hedonometer, which calculates the happiness of words and phrases. The Hedonometer allows us to analyze the emotional framing employed by Governor Phil Scott when engaging with linking, bridging, and bonding social capital. In doing so, the project advances understanding of the role of emotion in leadership responses to exogenous events, such as pandemics.

Nhat-Dang Do, Trinity College

Narratives of Influence: Racial Minority Interest Groups and Narrative Lobbying in California

Interest groups that advocate for the interests of racial and ethnic minority groups (RMIGs) have historically had limited resources and access compared to other interest groups when lobbying policymakers (Strolovitch 2007). Yet, RMIGs do achieve success in attaining policy goals, ranging from civil rights to education. In analyzing 2,454 interest group letters sent to the California State Legislature from 1997 to 2006, we find that RMIGs utilized overt and covert racial mentions to strengthen an appeal-heavy strategy, which varied significantly from the strategies of other interest group types. To further contextualize these findings, we explore case studies amongst the 334 AAPI, Black, and Latino interest group letters within this sample, noting how RMIGs employed varied strategies and focused on specific issue areas to achieve policymaking influence in California.

Esra Doger, University of Massachusetts Lowell

Tradwives Across Borders: Cultural and Ideological Patterns in U.S. and Turkish Influencer Content

This study offers a cross-country comparison of “tradwife” (traditional wife) influencers in the United States and Turkey, focusing on how contemporary digital media shapes and spreads traditional gender ideology. We identify the most prominent tradwife influencers in each country based on follower counts and platform visibility, and collect their public content from Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. Using text-scraped captions and video transcripts we apply Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) analysis to examine linguistic patterns, emotional tone, moral framing, and gender-normative messaging across national and cultural contexts. Our findings highlight both convergent and divergent rhetorical strategies: while U.S. and Turkish influencers promote similar ideals of domesticity, femininity, and family, they differ in their emotional registers, moral appeals, and the sociocultural narratives they employ. By situating tradwife discourse within broader political and cultural environments, this study contributes to understanding how traditional gender norms are being reframed, popularized, and globalized through digital platforms.

Robert Downes, University of Connecticut

The Majesty of Law and the Separation of Powers: Sandra Day O’Connor as a Platonic Philosopher-Queen

This chapter advances the claim that Supreme Court justices are political philosophers: they reason publicly about how power should be organized, constrained, and justified, using the language of law as their common vocabulary for advancing and adjudicating normative arguments about constitutional governance. Focusing on Justice Sandra Day O’Connor, I read her opinions not merely as routine applications of high court precedent but as a sustained contribution to a distinctive theory of constitutional order and judicial power. I argue that O’Connor’s jurisprudence on the separation of powers, including her account of the judiciary’s role and the scope of judicial authority, articulates what I call a political philosophy of modest majesty, a formulation drawn from her partly autobiographical book *The Majesty of the Law* (2002). Law is “majestic” in its capacity to structure and stabilize political life, yet the judiciary’s role within that order must remain carefully bounded, context-sensitive, and attentive to the practical functioning of the political branches. Through a psychoanalytic reading of O’Connor’s biographical materials and writings, together with a close doctrinal analysis of her separation-of-powers, federalism, and institutional-competence opinions, I reconstruct her vision of a judiciary that is neither deferential to the point of abdication nor activist to the point of usurpation. Instead, she defends a middle path between formalism and functionalism grounded in pragmatism, case-specific equilibrium, and respect for the reciprocal autonomy of the elected branches. Methodologically, the chapter treats judicial opinions as texts in political theory, placing O’Connor in conversation with foundational debates about the separation of powers, the rule of law, and the limits of judicial review. As the first chapter in a six-part project on the women of the Supreme Court, this investigation establishes a framework for reading each justice as a political theorist whose jurisprudence discloses a coherent—if often implicit—theory of democratic governance and political power.

Sara Driscoll, Bridgewater State University

Why Some May Not “Just Believe Science”: A Rhetorical Examination of Disparities in Public Health Distrust within the Framework of Health Equity

Contemporary outbreaks of previously eradicated disease have left American health officials in the predicament of convincing distrusting communities to opt in to vaccination programs responsible for reducing the prevalence of these diseases. Though distrusters are frequently written off as outlandish conspiracy theorists, there are nuances that confound this belief—especially when considering groups long disenfranchised by the United States. Historical medical abuses such as the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment and the research conducted on Henrietta Lacks—and the modern-day neglect commonly seen in distinct cancer and birth mortality rates—impede trust in the medical system. To address this neglect, communication from health officials is an important strategy to repair broken trust. Effective communication begins with listening; therefore, I employ a content analysis to examine rhetoric used by the Black community to better understand which pressure points health officials must address to regain trust. In this project, historical African-American newspapers are examined alongside mainstream-media publications, utilizing both perspective coding and a keyword occurrence analysis. A statistically significant difference is found between each sample’s mean number of negatively, but not positively coded articles; additionally, there are statistically significant correlations between keywords unique to one sample that allow for better insight into attitudes on public health.

Jaclyn Dziadose, Saint Anselm College

Developed Democracies and Polarization: The Nature of Healthy and Unhealthy Politics During the Brexit Debate

There is general agreement that polarized debate and speech is negative, but how do we differentiate this from healthy democratic debate? To answer this question I develop indicators for political polarization and healthy democratic debate based on a careful reading of the literature on polarization. I then apply these indicators in a content analysis of op-eds from major British newspapers to determine the extent to which the Brexit debate was characterized by polarized debate or healthy democratic debate. While op-eds contained both polarizing and democratic traits, I found they exhibited more indicators of political polarization than healthy debate. By studying the rhetoric used in a major issue like Brexit, we can better understand the nature of polarization in developed democracies, so that problematic politics can be distinguished from healthier forms of political discussion.

Sam Edwards, Quinnipiac University

International Environmental Space Law: Towards Sustainable Use of Low Earth Orbit

The seemingly vastness of space is now alarmingly congested. Over 10,000 satellites and 140,000,000 pieces of space debris currently orbit the Earth. These figures are increasing at exponential rates. Rocket launches which once were rare and awe-inspiring, now occur on a near-daily basis. This is a byproduct of the poorly regulated race to space and will only get worse over time without interventions. Aside from the limited orbital space, there is also a limited number of frequencies for communications with satellites. This is like terrestrial FM radio. There are only so many stations and interference on the same frequency can render a station useless. This is the same issue with satellite communications. Each satellite requires a frequency for communication. The space race has evolved from an extension of the Cold War competition among superpowers to a “space rush” by private companies. The existing international regulatory framework is insufficient to prevent the tragic overuse of these shared resources. In fact, the current system exacerbates the problem by prioritizing efficient use of these limited natural resources of orbital space and broadcast frequencies. International environmental space law remains in its infancy, despite the space race starting in 1957 with the Soviet Union’s launch of Sputnik. Although the technology of space exploration has grown by giant leaps, the legal system is woefully inadequate and outdated. This paper focuses on the low earth orbit portion of space exploring current and anticipated threats. Next it analyzes the existing systems governing space and their limitations. The final section proposes a framework drawn from terrestrial international environmental law to establish effective international environmental space law.

Adam Eichen, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Conceding Political Power: Why New York Lawmakers Voted to Overhaul Their Campaign Finance System

In April 2019, the New York legislature established a commission to design a public campaign financing program and lower the state's contribution limits. This marked the most significant overhaul of the state's campaign finance system in decades and fundamentally altered the status quo under which incumbents raised money. Far from a unique occurrence, since 2000, New York has passed more of these types of reforms — what I call Citizen Empowerment Policies (CEPs) — than any other non-ballot initiative state. But this poses an empirical puzzle. Party and state legislative leaders should be expected to strongly oppose policies that create electoral uncertainty and change the status quo under which they won power. And given leaders' positional dominance in political processes, they should be overwhelmingly successful in thwarting these policies. Yet, these bills became law, and are common in states across the country. This paper uses the campaign finance fight in New York as a case study to better understand the factors that lead legislatures to adopt CEPs. Ultimately, I conclude that campaign finance reforms were a “common carrier” (Schickler 2001); legislators had diverse and distinct reasons to vote for it, and only when the bill appealed to a combination of incentives comprising a majority did it pass.

Marc Eisner, Wesleyan University

Deconstructing the Regulatory State: Trump, Deregulation, and the Weaponization of Regulatory Intervention

The paper situates the Trump regulatory agenda within a broader historical context. For more than four decades, presidents of both parties have embraced the theory of market failure and cost-benefit analysis as the foundation of regulatory review. The early months of Trump's second administration, however, mark a sharp break from this bipartisan consensus in four respects. First, executive orders have directed agencies to revoke regulations with little or no regard for weighing costs against benefits. Second, they have instructed agencies to bypass the notice-and-comment requirements established by the Administrative Procedure Act. Third, rather than simply targeting existing rules for repeal, the administration has pursued reductions in force that threaten the long-term capacity of regulatory agencies. Finally, regulatory actions—when pursued—have been deployed for overtly political purposes rather than to support market governance. The paper concludes by considering the long-term implications of this departure from established regulatory practice.

Marc Eisner, Wesleyan University

Crisis and the Hobbled Leviathan: Inviting Catastrophe

Throughout American history, crises have often served as catalysts for expanding state authority. The current Trump administration has similarly invoked national emergencies and crises to justify major policy shifts. Yet these efforts are situated within a contradictory ideational framework shaped by the unitary executive theory and conspiratorial narratives about the “Deep State.” On the one hand, the unitary executive theory provides a constitutional rationale for concentrating power in the presidency. On the other, fears of the Deep State have driven efforts to dismantle the very administrative apparatus necessary for carrying out presidential directives. This contradiction highlights a central tension: attempts to expand presidential authority while simultaneously eroding the institutional capacity that makes such authority effective. The result is a paradox. In weakening the administrative state, the administration undermines its own ability to govern and compromises the state's capacity to respond to the kinds of low-probability, high-impact events—economic crises, pandemics—that have recurrently reshaped American politics. The Trump administration thus illustrates how ideological commitments to executive supremacy and hostility to bureaucracy can generate self-defeating outcomes that weaken both presidential power and state resilience.

Giuliano Espino, Framingham State University

Celebrity as Security Actor: Taylor Swift and the Politics of Protection

This paper argues that Taylor Swift and her global fanbase of Swifties are reshaping contemporary security politics. Drawing on feminist security studies, ontological security theory, and emerging work on celebrity security politics, it identifies three domains where Swift and her fandom challenge traditional conceptions of security: physical (terrorism threats during the Eras Tour), digital (cyber harassment and online safety), and economic (copyright disputes and creative labor rights). These cases reveal Swift as both a subject and agent of securitization, and Swifties as participants in a transnational affective security community. This network generates bottom-up pressure on institutions to address identity based, digital, and economic harms. Swift and her fandom expand the security agenda beyond state-centric paradigms to include cultural, emotional, and gendered forms of insecurity. The paper offers a new lens for understanding how fan communities shape global norms of safety in international relations.

Giuliano Espino, Framingham State University

Skrmetti and the Global Turn: Illiberal Globalism in the Supreme Court's Sexuality Jurisprudence

This paper examines how the conservative majority on the United States Supreme Court has developed a pattern of illiberal globalism, meaning the selective use of foreign and international norms in ways that justify the restriction of individual rights. The central focus of our analysis is *United States v. Skrmetti*, the defining case on transgender health care from the 2024 to 2025 term. We place *Skrmetti* alongside two cases from the same term, *Mahmoud v. Taylor* and *Free Speech Coalition v. Paxton*, to show how the same comparative logic appears across the Court's sexuality related docket. Across these opinions, the justices use global references in strategic rather than principled ways, shifting their comparative framework to support the doctrinal outcome they prefer. We identify two rhetorical modes. Aspirational globalism portrays new limitations on rights as consistent with approaches taken by peer democracies, illustrated most clearly by the opinion in *Skrmetti* and its alignment with European debates on transgender health care. Antagonistic globalism positions the United States in contrast to authoritarian regimes in order to critique earlier rights expanding precedents, echoing patterns seen in *Dobbs v. Jackson*. *Mahmoud* briefly critiques parliamentary systems, while *Paxton* avoids global comparison entirely, which highlights the contingent logic behind when and how the Court looks abroad. Through close readings of opinions and amici, we argue that this comparative rhetoric serves to narrow constitutional protections while presenting those restrictions as internationally legitimate.

Amalini Fernando, University at Albany, SUNY

Copy, Paste, Pass: How Model Legislation Shapes Consumer Data Privacy Policy in the U.S.

The recent wave of state-level consumer data privacy laws raises important questions about what drives the diffusion and design of these policies. One potential explanation is that, in the absence of federal action, industry and advocacy groups have increasingly relied on model legislation as a tool to shape state policymaking and preempt stronger federal or state-level protections. This paper examines how model privacy bills circulate across states by identifying and analyzing model legislation advanced by major interest groups. Using text analysis and document comparison techniques, the study measures the degree of textual borrowing between state privacy bills. It then evaluates whether political and institutional characteristics such as partisanship, legislative professionalism, or regional proximity help explain any patterns. Preliminary findings indicate substantial textual convergence among states adopting privacy laws after 2018. Industry-backed model bills appear disproportionately influential in this process, suggesting that interest groups play a significant role in structuring the diffusion of privacy legislation. The results will underscore the importance of model legislation in shaping the emerging U.S. privacy landscape and illuminate how diffusion dynamics may shape future technology policy toward specific regulatory outcomes.

Lauren Foley, Western Michigan University

Using Civil Rights Symbols in Constitutional Politics: Banning Affirmative Action in California and Michigan

While bans on affirmative action made headlines from the Supreme Court in 2023, this conservative public policy goal was achieved at the state level decades earlier. Outside of courts and lawyers, activists organized to ban affirmative action through popular referenda. We think of conservative legal mobilization as effectively sprouting from the judiciary, public interest law firms, and professional organizations. Yet far from the well understood sites of the conservative legal movement, legal mobilization to ban race conscious public policies is a story that includes policy advocates from the classroom, not the courtroom. Through archival research and interviews with the faculty activists, this article explores the first two cases of anti-affirmative action constitutional amendments in California and Michigan. University faculty led campaigns that amended state constitutions, cutting off avenues for rights expansion and fueling movements towards “colorblind” interpretation of constitutional equality guarantees. Activists repurposed ideas, namely the language and symbols of the civil rights movement, to achieve their policy goals. Looking at those resources and techniques gives insight both to the wider politics of constitutional change outside of courts, and the origins story of how affirmative action was banned.

Ashley Fox, University at Albany, SUNY

Let Them Eat Pets: Scapegoating and Support for Restrictive Migration Policies

What effect does scapegoating migrants have on support for restrictive immigration policies and political behaviors? How effective is political misinformation in activating nativist sentiment? This study opportunistically leveraged a survey experiment highlighting Trump’s inaccurate comments concerning Haitian migrants eating pets during the Presidential debate in the week following the debate to examine downstream impacts on support for restrictive migration policies and vote choice. We find no effect of reminding respondents of Trump’s xenophobic comments either on attitudes or on intention to vote for Trump. However, we do find evidence of a modest boost for having more compassionate and liberal policies towards immigrants and intention to vote for Harris. We find no heterogenous effect by party identification suggesting that movement towards embracing a more compassionate immigration policy or towards voting for Harris was driven by political independents or those with weaker partisanship. This suggests that priming the public to scapegoat migrants does not cause people to become more conservative in their policy attitudes or behaviors and may in fact backfire and have a moderating effect.

Nicole Freiner, Bryant University

Assessing Childhood Food Security: Policy and the Pandemic in New England

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) is a central component of U.S. social policy, yet its effectiveness is shaped by the fragmented structure of American federalism and long-standing patterns of racialized inequality. Drawing on the theoretical lens of food oppression—a framework that highlights how structural racism, administrative burden, and uneven policy implementation restrict access to nutrition—we compare the performance of the NSLP across six New England states during the COVID-19 pandemic and in the recent period of policy normalization. Using federal and state-level data (USDA, NCES, FRAC), we show that the pandemic exposed deep vulnerabilities in school-based food systems: participation rates plummeted in most states despite stable eligibility, revealing systemic failures in crisis responsiveness. We then assess how contemporary policy reforms, including state-level universal meals legislation, anti-stigma provisions, and administrative changes to SNAP and school nutrition programs, address—or fail to address—the inequities revealed during the pandemic. Our findings suggest that while current policies mitigate some disparities, the absence of a federal mandate for universal school meals continues to reproduce structurally unequal access to food for children. The comparative analysis demonstrates that food oppression persists both during crisis and in “normal” policy environments, underscoring the need for cohesive national standards to ensure equitable nutrition access for all K–12 students.

Anna Gagliastro, Simmons University

Policy Theory: From Order to Opportunity

Public policy, or the study of the state and its attempt to rule, has held shifted considerably over time in the traditions devoted to its study. This paper examines that development, comparing a theory more sequential and neat, to others more dysfunctional and random. Mark E. Rushefsky's *Public Policy in the United States* (2018) and Christopher Weible's *Theories of the Policy Process* (2023) trace this evolution from a rationalist, organized beginning to a pluralistic and messy approach. Early theories like the Stages Model framed law-making as a logical and consecutive process, while later methods like the Garbage Can and Multiple Streams theories emphasized complexity and chance. These frameworks form the foundation of a rational order toward an understanding of changes of timing, ideas, and politics in relation to theory.

Mneesha Gellman, Emerson College

CholoTech: Call Centers and Deported People in the Circular Migration of Predatory Capitalism

This paper explores the way that migration, labor, and language intersect in the cycle of predatory capitalism across the US and Mexico. People from Mexico migrate to the US for many reasons, including fleeing violence and for expanded economic opportunities. Some find work in US businesses, whether in the formal or informal economy, and many, especially those who come to the US as children, learn English while in school and work. Under multiple US administrations, people who are undocumented or have other unsuccessful status adjustment cases, including the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), have been deported, or self-deported to Mexico. There, their US-gained English makes them desirable employees for US companies, who pay starting salaries of US\$6 an hour, compared to the significantly higher wages these same companies pay in the US. Based on ethnographic fieldwork in Mexico City, including interviews with call center workers, we identify the ways in which migration, labor, and language skills intersect to fuel the cycle of predatory capitalism. We argue that, while bilingual call center workers in Mexico are able to make above-average livelihoods in the city, the fact that they have been returned to Mexico as a consequence of US immigration policy entraps them as a type of captured labor with the complicity of both states.

Tobias T. Gibson, Westminster College (MO)

Biden, Congress, and the Battle Over Supporting Ukraine

The Biden administration's effort to support Ukraine after Russia's invasion in 2022 and the congressional challenges it faced exemplifies the shifting patterns of activity and assertiveness within Congress and its members amid their efforts to influence American foreign policy. This paper examines the changing dynamics within today's congressional foreign policymaking through the Ukraine case study and an application of previous scholarship on members' policy preferences. In particular, this analysis utilizes the congressional foreign policy entrepreneurs (Carter & Scott 2009; 2010 and Lantis 2019) and opportunists (Homan 2024) frameworks to explore congressional behavior around the issue of America's support of Ukraine. What avenues of influence did members of Congress use in their efforts to influence policy and how were these tactics impacted by a variety of goals (personal, party, institutional) and political conditions? Our analysis provides further evidence of the multidimensional political arena that exists within congressional foreign policy today and how this is playing out across issues that were once broad areas of bipartisanship.

Tobias T. Gibson, Westminster College (MO)

Intoxication, Impairment, and Inconsistent Consent: Miranda's Blind Spot in Police Interrogations

In recent decades, protections around sexual consent have been established into law broadly. In addition to legal penalties, college conduct codes remind students and signage at bars remind patrons that consent may not be attained from someone who is legally intoxicated—regardless of age. To provide but one example, Missouri's Revised Statutes expressly say that "[a] person commits the offense of rape in the first degree if he or she has sexual intercourse with another person who is incapacitated, incapable of consent, or lacks the capacity to consent." Yet, these legal protections are not afforded to intoxicated individuals who are held and questioned by the police. Miranda rights, including the rights to an attorney and the right to remain silent are frequently waived. In a particularly pernicious version, police officers routinely accept the waiver of these rights even when the individual being detained would lack the capacity to legally consent in other contexts. Even when some is in custody, and is visibly impaired, police can (and do) ask for and accept the waiving of Miranda rights. This is true even for juveniles who are intoxicated. Jacqueline R. Evans (2024) informs the reader of a situation in which a man "was arrested for fleeing a police officer in his truck, his blood alcohol level was .29, more than three times the legal limit of .08 in the U.S. The interrogator reported Jewell was slurring words and struggling to stand. Nonetheless, the court accepted his Miranda waiver, making Jewell's statements admissible during trial." The lack of consistency regarding consent and incapacity underscores broader concerns about the vulnerability of intoxicated individuals, even those who are visibly intoxicated, during the initial interrogation and beyond.

Miguel Glatzer, La Salle University

A Tale of Two Cities: Overtourism and Housing Policy in Lisbon and Barcelona

Southern Europe has seen a dramatic surge in foreign popularity in recent decades, attracting increasing numbers of tourists, digital nomads and ex-pats. Lisbon and Barcelona are among the cities most affected by these trends. Both have seen protests by local residents against overtourism. Complaints are numerous and include concerns about congestion and the loss of local stores catering to residents, replaced by souvenir and trinket shops, for example. Salient among these concerns is worry about the soaring price of housing. Apartments have been converted to airbnbs. Foreign buyers, with much greater purchasing power, have acquired homes and apartments. In addition, domestic migration to these cities has contributed to the problem. The result has been an affordability crisis, both for renters and would-be home purchasers. A recent report listed Lisbon as the most unaffordable city for local residents. This paper examines the causes of the housing crisis in these two cities, the demands made by local residents, and the political responses of city, regional and national governments who face countervailing pressures from the many who benefit from the tourism economy and the influx of digital nomads and ex-pats. Policies examined include caps on Airbnbs, taxes on foreign property buyers, attempts to limit tourism growth, efforts to increase housing construction and reforms to housing assistance.

Shane Gleason, Trinity College

Finding Your Voice: Intersectional Identities & Opinion-Writing on State Supreme Courts

Judicial opinions are not a simple binary between which party wins and which loses. Rather, the language contained in judicial opinions creates binding precedent on lower courts that shapes the decisions of future jurists and the actions of countless actors throughout society writ large. In short, the way a jurist writes has profound consequences. In recent years, scholars have leveraged advances in computational text analysis to explore the myriad of ways jurists write. Many factors predict opinion writing, including jurists' immutable characteristics. We explore how jurists' identities, particularly intersectional ones, shape opinion writing on state supreme courts. We opt for these courts because of the rich institutional variation between courts in terms of both structures and overall diversity. Since overall levels of diversity can change the extent to which jurists downplay the salience of difference, we focus in particular on recent years in which state supreme courts have grown far more diverse.

Stephen Goniprow, Hillsdale College

John Rawls and Global Justice Theory

The problem of global justice has become a preeminent concern of American political theorists over the last three decades. The proposed paper traces the origins and development of global justice theory and argues that John Rawls's 1971 magnum opus, *A Theory of Justice*, should be understood as the point of departure for this relatively new and growing branch of political philosophy. The paper begins with a concise analysis of Rawls's core ideas on domestic justice and then turns to Rawls's brief teaching on international relations, which was viewed pejoratively as conservative and summarily rejected by the generation of global justice theorists that followed him. In the attempt to clarify why Rawls's theory of international relations shocked the conscience of global justice theorists, the paper also explores the political-historical setting within which John Rawls produced his account of international justice. It contends that Rawls's views broke from consensus ideas—both in Washington and in academia—on America's moral obligations abroad, and on the changing nature of international relations. The paper, finally, concludes with an explanation as to why Rawls—despite being opposed to the global wealth transfers invariably supported by global justice theorists—became such a towering figure in the global justice literature.

Amishai Goodman-Goldstein, American University

The Decline of Civic Formation: Elite Higher Education as a Causal Driver of Polarization in 21st Century America

This paper argues that elite American higher education has shifted from civic integration to cultural cleavage, becoming a primary institutional driver of 21st-century political polarization. Drawing on Tocqueville, Lasch, Lind, Marcuse, and Freire, it traces how universities abandoned civic formation for managerial ideology and moral performance, with critical pedagogy as a central mechanism. Through qualitative analysis of institutional change—in admissions, governance, curriculum, and faculty ideology—the paper contrasts mid-20th-century integrationist universities with their contemporary role in elite ideological sorting and affective polarization. While acknowledging empirical limits, it contends that polarization is structurally rooted in elite higher education's repudiation of its republican civic responsibility. As a secular, communitarian critique, it calls for reinstating civic judgment in elite formation rather than post-liberal or theological alternatives.

Justin Greenman, Yale University

Guy Vander Jagt and the Allure of the Insecure Majority

The best mechanism for understanding the Republican Party's unsuccessful attempts to win a majority in the House of Representatives during the Reagan and Bush presidencies, and the institutional changes such a mission wrought, comes from focusing on an oft-ignored political figure from that era, Guy Vander Jagt, the leader of the National Republican Congressional Committee from 1975 to 1993. Procedurally, Vander Jagt was a central player in the formulation of the electoral strategy and messaging of the House Republicans during this era, and many of his innovations as party leader, like a nationalized activist fundraising network, a top-down homogenous messaging apparatus, and the deployment of institutional rituals for political purposes, all hallmarks of our current congressional party state. Additionally, his coordination with Republican Presidents Reagan and Bush and their administrations reveals the benefits and pitfalls of electorally linking one's President to one's members of Congress. Finally, his complicated relationship with other congressional leaders, like Minority Leader Bob Michel and future Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, traditionally oversimplified as a binary ideological clash (Gingrich vs. the old guard), conceptually reveals how Republicans came to a cohesive intra-branch strategy for forging a majority. In the end, spotlighting Vander Jagt and the NRCC as key institutional actors demonstrates that the road to 1994 began far earlier than often assumed and, though it failed in the short-term, lay the foundation for the formal and electoral features that dominate the House of Representatives today. In that way, not only do the 1980s clearly become an even more formative pivot point in American political development, but also today's "insecure majorities" came from a genuine desire to correct what Vander Jagt saw as lacking in his party and his Congress, highlighting that the rise of polarized and antagonistic parties in Congress was neither inevitable nor accidental.

James Greer, United States Department of the Treasury

Institutional Foundation of the New Deal Insurance State

The paper argues that the New Deal's deepest and most enduring legacy was the creation of the insurance state—a federal system of public, risk-bearing institutions that stabilized private markets by underwriting them. While Hoover initiated prototypes such as the RFC and Federal Home Loan Bank System, his administration lacked the authority and coherence to turn them into a functioning system. Roosevelt's administration, confronting a collapsed banking and mortgage landscape in 1933, transformed these fragmented experiments into a coordinated national architecture for managing risk. Between 1933 and 1934, four core institutions were created or completed: FDIC (deposit insurance), HOLC (mortgage refinancing), FHA/MMIF (actuarial mortgage-default insurance), and FSLIC (thrift-deposit insurance). These entities operated as semi-autonomous public corporations, financed through insurance premiums, reserve ratios, and implicit Treasury credit rather than appropriations. This autonomy made them politically durable and allowed them to reshape markets on an unprecedented scale. The insurance state governed by classifying and pricing risk—insurable vs. non-insurable property, conforming vs. nonconforming loans, stable vs. unstable neighborhoods. These actuarial distinctions, embedded in underwriting manuals and appraisal systems, redistributed capital, opportunity, and investment. They structured suburban development, accelerated the decline of older urban housing, and reorganized the mortgage industry around standardized, federally defined criteria. Ultimately, the insurance state became the institutional foundation of modern American capitalism, embedding actuarial governance into financial markets, household security, and the built environment. 1,300

Margaret Groarke, Manhattan University

Missed Opportunities: NYC Agency Based Voter Registration

Nine years ago, NYC strengthened its agency-based voter registration program with the passage of Local Law 63 of 2014. How well are the 26 mandated City agencies doing at offering voter registration to New Yorkers? NYC's Pro-Voter Law, enacted in 2000 and strengthened in 2014, has not been evaluated since just before the law's 2014 revision, when five organizations co-published a report and advocated for changes in the law. Using data made available by the Pro-Voter Law's reporting requirements, we evaluate the efforts of the 26 City agencies required to offer voter registration to their clients. Overall, the data shows that the mandated agencies report having distributed 10.5 million forms between 2015 and 2023 (although we will interrogate what "distributed" means), and submitted 141,006 to the Board of Elections. The Human Resources Administration (HRA) is responsible for over 70% of these numbers, with Parks, Consumer Affairs and DYCD being the agencies who've distributed the most after HRA. (HRA is mandated to do voter registration under the NVRA). The agencies vary greatly in the volume of people they interact with, which creates challenges for evaluating their voter registration activity. Disturbingly, the data shows that voter registration activity by the agencies peaked long before the pandemic, and has declined even more so since then. While some City officials projected that automatic voter registration (AVR) would make agency-based registration less necessary, AVR is now two years behind schedule. This paper will analyze the available data to determine where agency voter registration is working and not working in NYC. It will identify the best practices that city agencies are using, or could use, and consider how NYC's agency registration program should adapt to greater use of online registration and future automatic voter registration.

Jeremiah Grove, University of Illinois, Chicago

Politics in the Social Media Age: The Dominance of Pseudo-Intimacy in Contemporary Politics

We live in a world dominated by a desire for intimacy. Through mass atomization and thus the creation of the population, there is the need to distinguish ourselves from one another. We take on common labels to create this distinction, but in doing so we sort ourselves into categories of those we ‘know’ and others. This process is explored through the biopolitics of Foucault and the atomization of Arendt. These authors, and those who continue their work, were not prepared for how true their theories would prove in the age of the internet. In online spaces we find pseud-intimacy with others. These relationships, however, have largely replaced meaningful relationships, going so far as to influence our face-to-face interactions. It is much easier to get a hit of intimacy from an algorithm than with another person after all. On the internet we feel seen and understood, and this is by design. In the age of surveillance capitalism, a term coined by Shoshana Zuboff, we have welcomed this due to this historical process. The political ramifications of this social reorganization have largely been unexplored.

Michael Gunter, Rollins College

Searching for Sustainability in the Sunshine State

Florida has become a profound political and cultural bellwether for the rest of the United States - but this was not always the case. As a peninsula, sandwiched between the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico, the state was once more of an afterthought than a national powerbroker. Since the infamous 2000 Presidential election, though, a shift is clear. Any search for a more perfect union, and especially one including a more sustainable society, must start with the sunshine state. With over 143 million visitors in 2024, and 61 percent of adult Americans having set foot in the state at one time or another in their lives, Florida is a perennial leader in US tourism. This uniquely positions the state as one many Americans have direct experience with, including an history fraught with missteps towards unsustainability that can serve as a lens to better understand our nationwide predicament.

Aziz Haddad, McGill University

The Working Day and the Erosion of Civic Virtue

Civic republicans argue that civic virtue and political participation are necessary conditions for sustaining the liberty that all enjoy within the political community. At the same time, Karl Marx argues that the capitalist mode of production is structurally driven to extend the ‘working day’ at the expense of workers’ leisure. Bringing these two traditions into dialogue, this paper contends that capital’s systematic erosion of workers’ leisure time hinders their cultivation of civic virtue by undermining the material conditions required for political participation. The paper reconstructs the republican account of civic virtue as an instrumentally valuable civic disposition that motivates citizens to engage in practices that sustain democratic institutions. On this account, civic virtue is not a personal moral quality but a shared public disposition through which citizens come to value and identify with the collective project of promoting liberty. This disposition is expressed and developed through habitual engagement in the political life of the community. I argue that such political participation presupposes leisure, since citizens must be free from the demands of necessary labour in order to engage in practices such as protesting or community organizing. Drawing on Marx’s analysis of the capitalist commodity production process in *Capital*, the paper argues that the leisure required for active citizenship is systematically eroded by capital’s drive to maximize surplus-value. Marx identifies a structural tendency within the capitalist mode of production to extend the working day in pursuit of surplus-value, a tendency that entails a correlative loss of leisure time. Interpreted through a republican lens, this analysis reveals a structural tension between capital’s drive to curtail leisure time and the cultivation of civic virtue. Unless counteracted, this tendency constitutes a systematic threat to civic virtue, and so the civic foundations of liberty.

Aliha Haider, Binghamton University, SUNY

Filtering the Facts: Partisan Identity and Resistance to Misinformation

Why does misinformation so often fail to change people's opinions? This paper argues that the persistence of public opinion in the face of false information is not simply the result of ignorance or skepticism, but of party loyalty acting as a psychological filter. Building on Zaller's (1992) RAS model and Mason's (2018) work on identity-based partisanship, I propose that individuals accept misinformation only when it aligns with their partisan identity and reject it when it threatens their group. To test this claim, I design a 2x2 survey experiment that randomly exposes participants to factual or false information that either supports or contradicts their party. I measure changes in policy attitudes, factual beliefs, and perceived credibility across levels of partisan strength. The results are expected to clarify when and why misinformation often fails to influence public opinion, advancing broader debates about persuasion, motivated reasoning, and the role of identity in democratic information processing.

M. Aynal Haque, Montana Technological University

Green or Grey? Chinese Development Investment and Politics of Climate Change in South Asia

Public perception of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) investment projects presents an evolving picture. While global media sentiment toward the BRI deteriorated in recent years, regional stakeholders often maintain more favorable views. In South Asia, many view the BRI as a net opportunity for their countries, primarily citing the benefits of infrastructure connectivity and economic development. However, growing environmental concerns are mounting in a region already mired by severe climate change impacts. Countries in South Asia face major environmental challenges, including massive solid waste generation and some of the worst regions for air quality. As a result, public discourse increasingly reflects underlying tensions about whether Chinese investments support a green transition or reinforce grey, high-emission development pathways. In this study, we examine how climate vulnerability influences stakeholder responses to Chinese development investments, using an analysis of existing empirical data and semi-structured interviews with key informants in Bangladesh and Pakistan. Our findings suggest that divergent perspectives exist across stakeholder groups, particularly in balancing short-term economic gains with long-term environmental sustainability.

Douglas Harris, Loyola University Maryland

Party Leadership Amid Change: The Varied Leadership Career of Tip O'Neill

Tip O'Neill, Speaker of the House from 1977 to 1987, is more known for his aphorisms ("all politics is local"), his media image, and his years spent sparring with Ronald Reagan than he is known for his internal leadership and organizational acumen. But O'Neill rose through the ranks of the leadership at a time of great institutional change. Becoming Whip (and simultaneously DCCC Chairman) in 1971, Majority Leader in 1973, and Speaker upon Carl Albert's 1976 retirement, O'Neill's leadership career straddled pre-reform and post-reform Congresses, new budgetary processes and deficit politics, pre- and post-C-SPAN media changes, and vacillations in unified and divided party control of government. Inasmuch as scholars of congressional leadership are attuned to how institutional context affects leadership style (Cooper and Brady 1981), those studies tend to compare leaders across broad historical periods. O'Neill's career gives us the opportunity to apply institutional context perspectives on leadership to one timeframe (1971-1987) and see the ways that but one institutional actor, O'Neill, managed the vast changes of his times. This case study, built from original analysis of O'Neill's papers (and those of his contemporaries in leadership, including John Brademas, Jim Wright, Tom Foley, Bob Michel, and Newt Gingrich), will employ the tenets of context theory to examine O'Neill's internal leadership, organizational responses to change, and adaptive style. [This paper will be a first pass at what I project will be a political biography of sorts that focuses on O'Neill's party philosophy and party organizational efforts.]

Bradley Hays, Union College

State-building In the Federal Judiciary: The Creation and Development of the Federal Defenders and Magistrate Systems

Contemporary accounts of judicial authority are rich and complex but incomplete. The picture created by such accounts is of a powerful and dynamic judiciary that influences law, policy, and politics through an array of authorities associated with “cases and controversies.” Yet, there is another source of judicial influence; recent scholarship on the institutionalization of the federal judiciary demonstrates that the administrative capacity of the courts alters and extends its influence. While the “administrative judiciary” is primarily responsible for ensuring the courts have the necessary human, capital, and institutional resources it deems necessary to fulfill its responsibilities, these capacities can also contribute to state-building. Moreover, when courts concert their adjudication and administrative authority, judicial influence over state-building expands significantly. Herein, I argue that the creation and expansion of the federal public defender system demonstrates this state-building capacity, one that not only required the judiciary to behave more like bureaucrats (than traditional roles as judges) but also led to novel expansions of the federal judiciary itself through the establishment and expansion of the federal magistrates system. The paper helps reveal a dynamism to judicial influence over the construction, maintenance, and expansion of the state’s governing capacity.

Kiara Hernandez, Harvard University

The Effect of Localized Exposure to Inequality on Preferences for Redistribution: Evidence from a Large Hospital Strike

How does prolonged, disruptive exposure to local inequality shape preferences for redistribution? We investigate this question through the case of the year-long strike at Saint Vincent Hospital in Worcester, MA—the longest hospital strike in Massachusetts history. Prior research finds that strikes have mixed political effects: highly disruptive actions, such as teacher strikes, can mobilize both supporters and opponents of striking workers, while less disruptive strikes tend to have limited impact. Building on this work, we argue that sustained exposure to visible strike activity may function similarly to other forms of local protest, which heighten political engagement by increasing the visibility and perceived stakes of collective action, even among individuals not directly involved. We test whether proximity to the Saint Vincent strike affected voter registration, turnout, and support for the 2022 “Millionaires Tax” ballot initiative, which proposed increasing taxes on high earners to fund local public goods. Our expectation is that for residents most exposed to the strike, concerns about economic inequality became more salient, which translated into voting behavior on a policy directly aimed at reducing inequality.

Paul Herron, Providence College

Reclaiming the Southern Past: Black Suffering and Service

Time is a political tool that can be used by governments and elites, but also by social movements and individuals. Nowhere has this tool been wielded with greater consequences than the American South. I argue it is the purposeful construction and manipulation of time, history, and public memory that has defined southern politics. American slavery was at its essence an institution designed so that one group of people controlled the time of another group of people. After emancipation, white supremacists shaped perceptions of the past in their effort to secure power and the racial hierarchy. Black southerners have long been aware of their place in time, as evidenced by testimony and narratives from enslaved people, African American Newspapers, politicians, activists, writers, and intellectuals. This paper explores how During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, African Americans used the past to exert control over the narrative through public celebrations, conventions, speeches, and writing. Nell Painter writes, “for too long we have normalized whiteness, as though to be white were to be natural... ‘Southerner’ used to mean only ‘white southerner,’ as though black southerners were not part of the South.” The course of American politics, however, was continuously shaped by the actions of Black southerners, who did not gaze back longingly on a lost past. This paper is the chapter from my book (in progress) on time and southern politics. It highlights the efforts of Black southerners to counter white supremacist mythology about the past.

Virginia Hettinger, University of Connecticut

Positivity Bias and (In)judiciousness: Perceptions of the Judiciary and Responses to Violations of Judicial Ethics Norms?

Positivity bias is a frame that involves “loyalty toward the institution” and a view that the judiciary differs “from other political institutions” (Gibson and Caldeira 2009, 142). In turn, positivity bias may shape perceptions of the judicial process, decisions, and events, including judicial confirmations. Using data from a conjoint experiment, we explore the how positivity bias and descriptions of judicial conduct interact to shape assessments of support for hypothetical U.S. Courts of Appeal nominees. The behaviors under study include those that signal hypothetical nominees behaving judiciously (such as presiding over a high profile case, giving a speech at their alma mater) and injudiciously (such as violating ethical norms by invoking racist stereotypes,

Tristan Hightower, Bryant University

Divided by Truth: Legislative Consequences of Presidential Signaling on Social Media

While significant research has examined how presidential rhetoric shapes public discourse and political behavior, few studies investigate its potential to directly influence congressional behavior. This project explores whether Donald Trump’s public communication on Truth Social and Twitter may contribute to heightened partisanship in the U.S. Congress. Building on scholarship that views presidents as partisan actors who exacerbate, rather than bridge, institutional divides, we expect that Trump’s posts targeting the institution and members of Congress, legislation, and procedural practices correspond with measurable shifts in legislative activity. Using a dataset of Trump-authored posts and congressional behavior, we will evaluate three outcomes: polarization in roll call passage votes, partisan alignment in bill sponsorship and cosponsorship, and the frequency of bill introductions. We anticipate that presidential digital rhetoric is associated with shifts in legislative behavior along partisan lines. This would suggest that informal, real-time presidential communication may function not simply as a reflection of partisan conflict but as an active accelerant, raising important questions about the evolving relationship between executive signaling and congressional polarization.

Alex Hindman, College of the Holy Cross

Governing By Discussion: The Constitutionalism of Attorney General Edward H. Levi

Edward Levi served as Attorney General for Gerald Ford in the contentious period following the Watergate Scandal. He is a noteworthy figure because his legacy has earned the praise of both Republicans and Democrats for restoring trust in the Department of Justice so quickly after the abuses of the Nixon presidency. This project will use speeches, public statements, and departmental papers to define the broad contours of his thought, particularly as it relates to trust in government, the separation of powers, and his reinvigoration of Walter Bagehot’s theory of a government by discussion. As new controversies arise today about trust in the federal government and the scope of executive power, returning to Levi’s instructions might prove helpful once again.

Lisa Holmes, University of Vermont

The Judiciary as an Issue in Recent Presidential Election Campaigns

This paper is part of a broader project on the attention given to the judiciary as a campaign issue in US presidential elections, including in party platforms and in candidate stump speeches. For this presentation, I intend to analyze how attention to the judiciary during the general election campaign connects to media endorsements of candidates and the extent to which members of the public express interest in the judiciary as a factor in their voting decisions.

Brigid Hughes, Saint Anselm College

NGO Strategies and Corporate Response in African Mining Sectors: A Comparative Study of NGO Reports on Cobalt in the DRC and Diamonds in Sierra Leone

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Sierra Leone have both faced severe human rights abuses due to the exploitation of critical minerals in their mining sectors. The DRC's cobalt mining is marked by forced labor, child labor, exploitation, and unsafe working conditions, fueled by global demand for cobalt in technologies such as electric vehicle batteries and smartphones. In Sierra Leone, the mining of "conflict diamonds" witnessed similar exploitation and also fueled the civil war from 1991 to 2002. The moral implications of these industries and the consequences of their abuses have gained the attention of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), who work to pressure corporations and governments to confront their role in exploitation and implement reforms. This research has two goals: to investigate the strategies employed by NGOs to mobilize actors, and to understand differences in the outcomes of these strategies. Analyzing Sierra Leone and the DRC—two cases with comparable mining conditions, similar abuses, and overlapping NGO approaches—reveals that Sierra Leone experienced more successful reform, while the DRC did not. I examine and define specific NGO strategies—"naming and shaming," "policy lobbying," and "transparency asks"—which aim to encourage transnational actors to challenge corporations and governments and push for substantial change. Ultimately, this study asks why NGOs were more effective in promoting corporate reform in Sierra Leone's diamond industry than in the DRC's cobalt sector. I find that Sierra Leone's partial success, particularly through the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS), reflected sustained NGO influence, while the DRC has seen no significant improvement. In conclusion, this research shows that NGO success depends heavily on international support, government willingness and capacity to enforce reform, and the complexity of the targeted supply chain.

Seok Hyun Hur, Kyungpook National University

The Impact of Efficiency–Order and Welfare-based Instrumental Understandings of Democracy on Authoritarian Support: The Moderating Role of Institutional Trust

This research scrutinizes the demand-side micro-foundations of democratic backsliding by examining how citizens' understandings of democracy shape their susceptibility to authoritarian alternatives. Challenging the prevailing literature that treats the instrumental understanding of democracy as a monolithic construct, this study conceptualizes instrumental orientations as comprising two distinct value hierarchies—Efficiency–Order and Welfare. To test this, the study disaggregates instrumental understandings of democracy into two dimensions: (1) Efficiency–Order-based orientations, which emphasize state capacity, administrative performance, and social stability; and (2) Welfare-based orientations, which prioritize redistribution, economic security, and social protection. Drawing on cross-national public opinion data from multiple survey waves, the analysis employs ordinal logistic regression models to examine how these orientations differentially affect support for authoritarian alternatives. The empirical findings reveal that efficiency–order orientations exhibit a negative association with authoritarian support, suggesting that citizens who value efficiency and order as democratic outcomes are paradoxically more committed to democratic proceduralism. Conversely, welfare-based orientations display a positive association, indicating that strong redistributive demands can reinforce the appeal of illiberal or autocratic options. The analysis further highlights the moderating role of institutional trust. While institutional trust amplifies the anti-authoritarian effect of efficiency–order orientations, it does not mitigate the pro-authoritarian tendencies linked to welfare-based orientations. Moreover, institutional trust itself exerts a main positive effect on authoritarian support, revealing a crucial paradox: confidence in state institutions does not necessarily imply commitment to democratic norms. By disentangling the content-based heterogeneity within instrumental understandings of democracy, this study refines the cognitive foundations of citizens' democratic evaluations in the era of democratic regression. It contributes a novel analytical framework for understanding how different expectations of democracy interact with institutional trust to shape regime preferences and political stability.

Prince Ifoh, Clark Atlanta University

Pan-Africanism and the Postcolonial State: Rethinking Legitimacy, Governance, and African Unity in the 21st Century

The contemporary African state faces a persistent legitimacy crisis that is rooted in colonial institutional inheritances, fragmented political identities, and externally shaped economic structures. At the same time, Pan-Africanism—historically conceived as a unifying force for liberation and continental solidarity—continues to serve as a powerful normative ideal for transcending Africa’s divisions. This paper examines the central paradox confronting Africa today: the continent aspires toward unity, yet the very states that constitute it were historically designed for fragmentation. Drawing from African political theorists and historical analysis, the paper argues that the failure of continental integration efforts is closely tied to the structural weaknesses of the postcolonial state, including dual publics, bifurcated citizenship, weak state-society relations, and dependency-driven political economies (Ekeh 1975; Mamdani 1996; Ake 1996; Rodney 1972). The study reinterprets Pan-Africanism not merely as an ideological inheritance of the liberation era but as a contemporary governance vision capable of addressing the continent’s legitimacy crisis and institutional fragmentation. Through an examination of colonial state legacies, the evolution of Pan-African thought, external constraints on African unity, contradictions of sovereignty, and potential pathways for governance reform, the paper proposes a conceptual framework for constructing a future Pan-African political community grounded in shared sovereignty, continental citizenship, strengthened regional institutions, and popular participation. It concludes that Pan-Africanism remains Africa’s most promising horizon for transforming statehood and achieving genuine continental unity in the 21st century.

Callum Ingram, University of Nevada, Reno

The Fearsome Audit: Walter Benjamin's Critical-Speculative Theory of Money

Scholars from a variety of disciplines have challenged widespread conceptions of money as a neutral medium of exchange, revealing instead how money and monetary systems reflect and reconstitute the political, economic, and moral-theological horizons of societies. The fragments that make up Walter Benjamin’s Arcades Project anticipate these arguments, offering the rudiments of both a critical theory of money’s role in shaping the world of capitalism and a speculative theory of the transformative power and utopian potential latent in modern money. This paper draws these fragments together into a coherent critical-speculative theory of money, aiming to make two primary contributions. First, it reconstructs Benjamin’s “dialectical image” of money as a site where the tensions between the material and mystical valences of capitalism are densely concentrated; money is both the purest and most legible commodity fetish. Second, it describes the conditions under which Benjamin suggests that financial crises can come to function as moments of “historical awakening” that reveal the contradictions and redemptive possibilities latent in money. This paper thus positions Benjamin’s monetary thought as a bridge between empirical studies of money’s social power and the practical question of how that power might be reclaimed for democratic and emancipatory ends.

Jason Jividen, Saint Vincent College

Institutions and Imperfections: The American Founding and the Limits of Political Science

According to The Federalist Papers, modern advances in the science of politics promised institutional remedies to the enduring problems of popular government. Nevertheless, the American Founders offered a sober admission that the Constitution was an imperfect document, due in part to the fact that political science itself was prone to imperfection. This paper will discuss the Founders’ political science through his lens, especially as that science is reflected in Madison’s Notes on the Constitutional Convention and The Federalist Papers.

Eliud Kabamanya, Clark Atlanta University

South-South Cooperation or Reinforcing Structural Dependency: An Analysis of China-Tanzania Relations.

China's relations with Africa, Asia, and Latin America have recently intensified, making it a strategic partner for social, economic, cultural, and political transformation in those regions. However, China's presence in the regions, particularly Africa, has raised doubts and debates among citizens and stakeholders. One group views China's involvement on the continent as a new scramble and a reinforcement of dependency relations. In contrast, the other group sees it as a model for South-South Cooperation. Tanzania, like other African countries, has engaged China in construction, trade, financing, training and scholarship, and industrial investment. The Tanzania-China relationship is one of the historical and ideological relationships among the South countries. The relationship began in the early 1960s, and in 1965, the first friendship agreement was signed between Tanzania and China. Since the signing of the friendship agreement (Sino-Tanzania agreement), the flow of goods between the two countries has been smooth. However, the analysis of whether this involvement constitutes a South-South cooperation model or reinforces dependence relations remains minimal. This paper argues that China-Tanzania relations represent the South-South cooperation model, with the caution that, if not guided, they may reinforce dependencies. Tanzania has to take advantage of what works for the country and what does not from China. The paper deploys the dependency school and the South-South cooperation framework to analyse China-Tanzania relations, using various projects and programs implemented by the two countries since the 1960s. The paper will use desktop and library research to generate information to inform the analysis and conclusion. The analysis of these relations will offer an opportunity to understand the nature and patterns of the relationship between the two countries and the continent.

Adanna Kalejaye, University of Massachusetts Boston

Climate Shocks and Urban Water Use: The Role of Institutional Response in Coastal Cities

This study examines how extreme climate events influence urban water use and whether institutional responses condition the magnitude and persistence of behavioral change. Using a comparative analysis of Boston (United States) and Cape Town (South Africa), the study analyzes municipal water usage data from 2010–2025 alongside documented governance interventions during periods of climate stress. While both cities share coastal exposure and multi-level governance complexity, they experienced markedly different hydrological shocks and policy responses. The findings show that climate shocks significantly reduce water consumption; however, the persistence of these reductions depends on coordinated institutional response. In Cape Town, the 2015–2018 drought produced a sharp reduction in water use (from over 1100 ML/day to approximately 500 ML/day), triggering stringent restrictions, enforcement measures, and policy coordination; followed by diversification into groundwater abstraction, desalination, and water reuse, indicating crisis-driven adaptation. Post-crisis consumption remains structurally lower than pre-drought levels, suggesting sustained behavioral adaptation. Boston, which did not experience a comparable supply crisis, exhibits relatively stable consumption patterns over time. These results indicate that institutional response moderates the relationship between climate stress and urban water use. The study contributes empirical evidence to debates on climate adaptation and urban water governance by demonstrating that crisis effects are conditional on governance dynamics rather than deterministic outcomes of environmental shock.

Antonia Kambolis, Trinity College

Because You Asked: Relational Organizing Through The Hartford Voter Captain's Project

Voting rates among people of color have been staggeringly low for decades. In the second year of the Hartford Voter Captain's Project, the question of what can mobilize and motivate people in majority-minority cities to vote is one that still seeks to be answered. This project takes a relational organizing approach to voter mobilization, employing the principles of civically engaged research to recruit participants to talk to people within their communities about voting using the socio-cultural cognition model. Building on what was learned in starting this project during the presidential election last year, this election presented a new set of challenges. This election was tough because the board of education election is historically low-salience. Despite the challenges this presented, there is a lot to learn about sustaining civic engagement, especially through the qualitative methods this project used. We show that Voter Captains demonstrated an increased sense of political efficacy post-participation, and report our findings on the effects of this model of voter mobilization through interpersonal connections on voting rates.

Wooljin Kang, Kyungpook National University

Authoritarian Nostalgia without memory: determinant of Park Chung Hee Nostalgia among Korean Youth

Why does nostalgia for an authoritarian leader persist among young citizens born after democratization? Drawing on an original web-based survey of South Koreans in their 20s and 30s (N=1,000), this paper theorizes and tests three mechanisms through which nostalgia for Park Chung-hee is reproduced across generations: (1) internalization of a growth-first developmental ideology, including acceptance of a chaebol-centered economy; (2) heightened security threat perceptions and anti-communist orientations; and (3) exposure to conservative media ecosystems. The dependent variable is a positive evaluation of Park's government as the most effective, modeled with logistic regression and reported as odds ratios with robust standard errors. All three mechanisms are statistically significant in the expected direction. Substantively, growth-first orientation (OR≈1.31), chaebol utility (OR≈1.34), anti-communism (OR≈1.35), and conservative-media exposure (OR≈1.44) meaningfully increase the odds of nostalgia. Among controls, perceived downward mobility, conservative self-placement, male gender, Daegu-Gyeongbuk origin, and worsening household economy are also associated with stronger nostalgia. Qualitative interviews corroborate the logics of developmental efficacy and persistent security anxiety. These findings suggest that youth nostalgia does not entail rejection of democracy per se but signals a crisis of democratic responsiveness under conditions of inequality, stalled mobility, and unresolved security dilemmas.

Nicholas Kapoor, Fairfield University

The Power of Choice: Designing "Choose Your Own Adventure" Learning Experiences that Empower Student Agency in Political Science Classrooms

Choice is a cornerstone of democratic participation – and of learning. This interactive workshop invites participants to reimagine course design through the lens of student autonomy and agency. Drawing on examples from political science and civic engagement courses, Nick Kapoor (Fairfield University) and Carrie LeVan (Colby College) will demonstrate how "Choose Your Own Adventure" assignments give students meaningful control over what, how, and when they learn. Participants will analyze models of assignment choice and prototype their own flexible frameworks that balance autonomy, rigor, and equity. Attendees will leave with ready-to-use strategies and templates to integrate structured choice into their teaching.

Nicholas Kapoor, Fairfield University

Beyond the Ban: Designing Authentic Political Science Assignments in the Age of AI

Banning AI isn't a strategy – it's a missed opportunity. This interactive session invites political science faculty to explore how to design assignments that use AI responsibly, preserve integrity, and deepen engagement. Together we'll move from fear to intentionality, rethinking how writing, research, and reflection can evolve in AI-enhanced classrooms. Participants will analyze real examples of assignment redesign and leave with practical strategies for integrating AI in ways that sustain authenticity, fairness, and academic rigor.

Emmalynne Karnes, Simmons University

People, Perception, and the Policymaking Process

n/a

Theodore Keesee, Georgetown University

Bizarrely Blue: Democratic Tilt of New England's Rural Congressional Districts

Conventional wisdom on the urban–rural political divide holds that rural areas comprise a reliably Republican voting bloc. Although previous research has engaged with the subject at both the national and state levels, few studies have considered regional variations using congressional districts as the unit of analysis. Notably, New England emerges as a striking exception here. Using 2020 U.S. Census Bureau data and Cook Partisan Voting Index (PVI) scores for the 119th Congress, this study identifies and analyzes all 44 majority-rural U.S. congressional districts. I find that New England's three qualifying districts (ME-02, NH-02, and VT-AL) average D5.0 PVI versus R16.5 for the 41 non-New England rural districts—a 21.5-point Democratic shift. This regional effect persists even after accounting for rural population share. Expanding on relevant academic literature, this paper aims to highlight an understudied dimension in U.S. political science research while simultaneously illustrating the distinctive partisan character of rural politics in New England.

Michael Kerr, University of Massachusetts School of Law - Dartmouth

Cutting the Gordian Knot of Gerrymandering in the Shortest Straight Line

Over the past year, several states across the country and political spectrum have implemented or attempted to implement new congressional maps with the express aim of consolidating partisan political power. These developments underscore the fragility of previous efforts to curb gerrymandering. Reform-minded legislation proposed in the House of Representatives would mandate state implementation of “independent” redistricting commissions as a solution to political gerrymandering. The legislation intends that these commissions use neutral redistricting criteria in a nonpartisan way to draw fair congressional districts. Other prominent reformers, concerned about persistent bias, advocate using computer algorithms enhanced by technological advancements like artificial intelligence to optimize maps according to neutral criteria and reduce human involvement in the redistricting process. But are these proposed solutions capable of ending the problem of political gerrymandering? This Article shows that current attempts at redistricting reform are structurally flawed and incapable of reliably constraining partisan gerrymandering. Analyzing the scope of the crisis facing American democracy the Article finds that the issue of political gerrymandering is immediate and growing. Drawing on developments in federal law, empirical examples of “independent” commissions and an analysis of the neutral criteria proposed by reformers, the Article explains why existing commission and algorithmic approaches cannot provide a durable solution. It then offers a nationwide redistricting framework based on the shortest splitline method as a neutral, simple, and judicially administrable rule that constrains partisan manipulation, enhances election transparency, and restores trust in democratic institutions. Finally, the Article reviews the legality of the framework proposed in light of recent Supreme Court jurisprudence in *Rucho v. Common Cause* and pending litigation in *Louisiana v. Callais*.

Katja Kleinberg, Binghamton University, SUNY

U.S. Perceptions of Government Intervention in the Economy

In 2022, the Biden administration initiated two legislative programs to increase government investment in domestic manufacturing, the Inflation Reduction Act and the CHIPS and Science Act. While government intervention in the economy has a long history in the United States, it is not uncontroversial. During the second Trump administration, investments through the IRA and CHIPS Act have been significantly scaled back or canceled outright. This study presents findings from four original public opinion surveys, conducted between April 2024 and May 2025 using nationally representative samples of respondents, to answer two questions: What determines individual-level support for government investments in the domestic economy? And what determines individuals' perceptions of who ‘wins’ and who ‘loses’ from these investments? It also investigates the extent to which local economic conditions, race, and partisanship interact to shape both perceptions of and support for U.S. government subsidies for manufacturing under two different administrations. The findings have implications for our understanding of the microfoundations of economic policy and the viability of sustained, long-term government intervention in the economy.

Helen Knowles-Gardner, Institute for Free Speech

The Selma 29: When Courage Risked Conviction (Or Much, Much Worse)

The day after 29 Black residents of Selma put their signatures to a petition calling for the city's schools to integrate in the fall of 1955, they found their names and addresses published in a front-page article in the Selma Times-Journal. The newspaper's disclosure of this personal information was, in part, designed to generate a violent response, and the predictable reprisals came swiftly. This was classic political violence, 1950s white supremacist Alabama style. It made headlines across the country but, curiously, has received minimal scholarly attention. Although not the example of political racial violence for which Selma is most infamous, and by no means the only example of political racial violence directed at the city's Black population, the story of the 29 deserves to be told. This is because these individuals weren't just targeted for supporting desegregation; they were targeted for supporting a primary legal goal of the NAACP. Most, if not all, of the 29 were members of the NAACP, and several of them were prominent local leaders of Selma's chapter. In Selma in 1955, mere membership in the NAACP could and did up(end) people's lives. This paper tells the stories of the Selma 29. It situates those stories within a timeline that leads up to the June 1, 1956 issuance of a temporary restraining order that put the NAACP out of business in Alabama for over eight years, and generated a series of landmark rulings from the Supreme Court of the United States holding that the state's efforts to demand disclosure of the names and addresses of the members of the NAACP in Alabama ran afoul of the First Amendment. This paper is part of "Dismembering the NAACP," a book project under contract with LSU Press.

Hyunsup Ko, Syracuse University

Alliance Cohesion as Deterrent Signaling: Evidence from U.S.–ROK Policy Alignment and North Korean Provocations

This paper investigates how junior allies in asymmetric alliances shape deterrence outcomes by altering alliance cohesion through their own policy choices. While existing research on extended deterrence centers on the senior ally's credibility and capabilities, it typically treats the junior partner as passive. This project instead emphasizes the junior ally's strategic agency, arguing that domestic political shifts and policy orientations can tighten or loosen alliance cohesion and thereby influence adversary behavior. The study conceptualizes alliance cohesion as the degree of policy alignment between patron and junior ally toward a shared adversary. High cohesion produces clear and credible deterrent signals; low cohesion creates ambiguity that adversaries can exploit. The paper develops a two-stage deterrence framework: nuclear deterrence between the patron and adversary is relatively stable, whereas conventional deterrence between the junior ally and adversary is sensitive to observable variations in intra-alliance alignment. Within this framework, changes in the junior ally's policies serve as deliberate signals that adversaries incorporate into their decisions to provoke or refrain. Empirically, the project employs a mixed-methods design. A formal model generates hypotheses that declining cohesion increases adversary provocations and that leadership changes in the junior ally shift cohesion and thereby deterrence effectiveness. A large-N analysis pairs the CSIS Beyond Parallel database of North Korean provocations with original monthly event-coded measures of U.S. and South Korean policy orientations, operationalizing cohesion as the absolute distance between the two scores. Two comparative case studies—one from the 1990s and one from the 2020s—use process tracing and archival materials to connect South Korean political transitions, fluctuations in U.S.–ROK cohesion, and patterns of North Korean provocations. The findings recast junior allies as consequential strategic actors and show that managing alliance cohesion is central to credible extended deterrence.

Raymond LaRaja, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

The Conservative Countercurrent: Young Republican Women and the New Gender–Generational Divide

Commentary on the gender gap often treats young women as a uniformly liberal bloc moving firmly into the Democratic coalition. But this portrait overlooks a striking and understudied development: a cohort of young Republican women who appear more religiously conservative and more affectively polarized than any comparable demographic group. In the 2024 ANES, 60% identify as born-again Christians, 50% interpret the Bible literally, and nearly all voted for Donald Trump—patterns that challenge assumptions about generational liberalization among women. Our study asks: How and why are young women diverging so sharply across partisan lines? Drawing on the ANES, CES, and GSS, we examine attitudes toward traditionalism, racial issues, abortion, policy preferences, and religiosity to map the sources of this divide. By analyzing the interaction of age, gender, and partisanship, we highlight emerging fractures within gender groups and within parties. These splits have implications for party coalitions, issue evolution, and the long-term shape of American political conflict.

Joshua Leon, Iona University

The Life Atomic: City Planning Under The Threat Of Annihilation, 1945-1960

The period between 1945 and 1960 began with the US detonating atomic weapons over cities. It culminated in the proliferation of drastically more powerful hydrogen warheads delivered by ballistic missiles, portending the end of cities in a thermonuclear war. This coincided with fast suburban growth that solidified metropolitan aesthetics. Planners cooperated with defense officials who considered cities prime targets, and thus obsolete. Revisiting forums like Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, a bellwether of this relationship, this article reveals under-discussed shifts in urban history after the bomb. Revised planning norms in the nuclear age ushered in a new era of exclusionary urbanism. The threat of annihilation, either from bulldozers or warheads, ensured that some of the earliest resistance to Cold War policymaking came from urban planning circles. By the end of this period debates over cities had been fundamentally reconfigured around the social problems inherent in urban disassembly schemes.

Kenneth Andrew Andres Leonardo, Hamilton College

On the Way to Virtue: A Comparison of the Pursuit of Virtue in Aristotle and Tsunetomo

In this paper, I compare Aristotle’s view of nobility-and-goodness (καλοκαγαθία) in the context of Ancient Greece with Yamamoto Tsunetomo’s view of the way of the warrior (bushidō or 武士道) for the Japanese samurai. This analysis is vital because it sets up a comparison between two distinguished cultures to highlight some unduly neglected similarities and pivotal differences. In the Eudemian Ethics, Aristotle stressed that the noble-and-good human being has the noble goods, is virtuous, and does the noble things like for their own sake. In the Hagakure, Tsunetomo gave prominence to serving one’s lord, honoring one’s parents, benefiting others, and being courageous in the face of death. While there are some striking contrasts between these warrior cultures, there are also notable parallels worthy of more investigation including the function of honor in the pursuit of justice and moral virtue, the role of piety, and lastly, the place of the highest truth or wisdom in the warrior way of life. The preponderance of such similarities requires scholars to inquire further about a possible universal warrior way of life and its enduring relevance when confronting the issue of injustice in the political community.

Thomas Leung, Tufts University

From Liberalization to Weaponization: A Mixed-Methods Analysis of Media Sentiment and Strategic Trade Policy in the Modern Sino-U.S. Rivalry

This study investigates the evolution of United States trade policy from 2017 to 2025, examining how domestic institutional, electoral, and geopolitical factors shaped major policy decisions during the transformation from multilateral liberalization toward strategic competition and coercive economic statecraft. Focusing on Sino-U.S. trade relations, the research employs a mixed-methods approach combining computational sentiment analysis of media coverage with game-theoretic modeling to illuminate the relationship between public discourse and trade policy formation. The methodology analyzes a corpus of approximately 50,000 articles from national newspapers, broadcast transcripts, and financial publications, organized across five periods demarcated by pivotal events including the Section 301 tariff announcements of August 2017, the Phase One Agreement, and the October 2022 semiconductor export controls. Sentiment classification is applied corpus-wide, with temporal and event-response patterns identified through change-point detection and permutation-based significance testing. These sentiment patterns are subsequently integrated into stylized two-player games incorporating media-derived domestic audience cost parameters. Finally, findings are synthesized to address theoretical debates concerning weaponized interdependence, coalitional dynamics, and institutional constraints on strategic reorientation. The research addresses empirical gaps identified in contemporary international political economy scholarship, which provides sophisticated frameworks for analyzing structural forces but limited systematic examination of how these forces translate into specific policy outcomes through domestic political processes mediated by media discourse. By operationalizing media sentiment as a proxy for domestic political constraints within formal strategic models, this study advances understanding of the mechanisms linking public discourse, electoral pressures, and the fundamental reorientation of American trade policy toward technology-focused economic statecraft.

Perri Leviss, Rhode Island College

Teaching Public Policy with Library Archives – How to use primary source data to promote applied public policy skills and learnings in undergraduate political science courses?

In 2024, the Rhode Island College Adams Library received a new archival collection consisting of papers from Congressman Langevin's legislative efforts. Rep. Langevin was a member of Congress representing the 2nd Congressional District in Rhode Island from 2001 to 2023. In a collaboration between the Department of Political Science and the Library's Special Collections, an upper-level public policy course was designed using Congressman Langevin's historical papers from 1997-2023 in order to teach undergraduate students the skills in primary source data collection analysis, and to provide an applied context for the students to intensively study current-day categorical public policy areas. Students chose a wide range of public policy issues to study over the semester based on what data was available in Congressman Langevin's collection including foster care rehousing, transportation for people with disabilities, food & nutrition services for low income communities, medical care for undocumented families, community block grants, and affordable housing. Over the course of the semester, students met with Congressman Langevin to discuss their public policy research ideas and they visited the Library's Special Collections on three occasions during class time. Students then used the primary source data along with secondary data sources to draft op-ed pieces, policy memos, and legislative testimony. After each library visit, the students completed feedback forms about their experiences. In this paper, pedagogical learnings from the academic course are presented along with a review of the literature about how archival research and primary source data analysis can more generally serve as intensive learning opportunities for undergraduate students in the disciplines of political science, public administration, and public policy.

Aaron Ley, University of Rhode Island

Stakeholder Perceptions of Climate Resilience Policy Instruments in Rhode Island

Stakeholders across Rhode Island encounter a wide range of challenges as their communities pursue climate resilience projects to address the significant economic, public health, and infrastructure impacts of climate change. To better understand these challenges and opportunities, we interviewed more than forty members of a broader network of climate resilience, stormwater management, and green infrastructure professionals. We asked participants about the benefits and limitations of traditional financing mechanisms and their perspectives on how decision-making should be organized, including local, regional, and state approaches. This paper investigates the results of these interviews by applying topic modeling to identify recurring themes across responses and sentiment analysis to assess how different stakeholders view the strengths and weaknesses of the available financing tools and governance structures.

Mary Lind, Binghamton University, SUNY

Digital Damage Control: Cyberattacks and the Logic of Online Censorship

How do states respond to the vulnerabilities presented by cyber conflict? I argue that in order to minimize reputational and national security damage following state-sponsored cyberattacks, states have incentives to censor content online — a subtype of digital repression known as information coercion. Specifically, after a state-sponsored cyberattack, democracies should engage in covert online censorship, and autocracies should engage in overt online censorship. Censorship should also be greater following cyberattacks on government targets as opposed to private sector or military targets. Testing my hypotheses at the country-year level using panel data and at the event level using an interrupted time series design, I find moderate support for the idea that governments respond to cyber threats with online censorship. My results indicate the potential for rights-based cyber conflict research and are an important first step in exploring the ways in which states respond to the vulnerabilities posed by cyber conflict.

Briana List, United States Military Academy

Russian Information War in the Baltic States

This study examines how and why Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania have served as testbeds for Russian information warfare; it portrays the steady shift in Russian grand strategy from limited and ineffective soft balancing to a more coercive political warfare that blends identity politics, historical revisionism, and state-backed networks. The paper argues that these efforts are not merely supplementary to Russian strategy, but are at the heart of Moscow's attempt to erode NATO cohesion and chip away at Western influence along its borders. For decades, Russian actors have identified and weaponized existing social fractures, such as those tied to language, citizenship, and Soviet nostalgia, to divide and destabilize democracies on the former superpower's periphery; they magnify these fissures through slanted narratives about discrimination, fascism, and NATO's "provocations," among others. Russian efforts have only grown more sophisticated, nurturing and mobilizing a dense ecosystem of cultural organizations, traditional media, and social media to manipulate existing cleavages and exploit democratic openness. Furthermore, the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has generated new opportunities and constraints for Russian influence. The invasion aptly demonstrates how these narratives flood the information environment during moments of heightened political tension. By tracing Russian objectives, identifying the most pervasive themes, and describing how narratives circulate across different platforms, this study situates Russian information warfare within its larger grand strategy toolkit. We conclude with preliminary assessments of Russia's successes and failures in influencing beliefs and behaviors in the Baltics and outline challenges for future research.

Samuel Little, Boston College

American Populism and American Democracy

Populism is a lasting force in American politics, but it is often ill-defined to the point of incoherence. Several scholars have attempted to define the phenomenon on a global scale, including Jan Werner Mueller, Jon Judis, and Richard Hofstadter. Others, including Christopher Lasch and Michael Kazin, treat American populism as fundamentally distinct from the types of populism found in Latin America, Europe, and elsewhere. These latter thinkers also treat populism in less ideological terms, as they recognize its ability to serve as a means of communication for both right- and left-wing politicians. In this paper, I will argue that the latter approach is broadly correct, if incomplete, and that the attempt to deal with populism as a rigid ideology operative on the international stage leads to incoherence.

Jennifer Lucas, Saint Anselm College

Change and Stability in Older Voters Attitudes

Political predispositions tend to be relatively stable over a person's lifetime (Sears and Funk 1999). How do older voters who have shifted either partisan identification or attitudes explain those shifts? In an exploratory analysis, we examine qualitative interview data with older voters about their political attitudes. While most interviewees did indeed report stability in attitudes and partisanship, we identify several types of explanations for change, including party shifts, a sense that the parties have shifted away from their political beliefs over time, and events, which point to major events in a person's life that prompt a shift in perspective. Our results suggest future avenues for research in attitude change.

Michael Lucchese, Liberty Fund

"Sensations of Horror and Disgust": Shakespeare's Coriolanus and the Problem of Faction

In Federalist 9, Publius comments that "It is impossible to read the history of the petty republics of Greece and Italy, without feeling sensations of horror and disgust." Fundamentally, Publius seems to believe ancient regimes failed because they could not constrain the revolutionary forces of faction. In his Roman plays, William Shakespeare dramatizes this problem and demonstrates how it led to the downfall of antiquity's grandest republic. But in one of his later comedies, Measure for Measure, Shakespeare shows how a regime can mitigate the problem of faction by elevating its moral horizons. In this paper, I will argue that Publius demonstrates a similar political wisdom in his defense of the U.S. Constitution in The Federalist. Like Publius, Shakespeare suggests that faction is the central problem in republic politics. Coriolanus shows that the Romans' mechanisms for mitigating faction led to the same maladies Publius fears—particularly civil war and foreign interference—and were therefore unsuccessful. Shakespeare, if he does not predict the emergence of a constitutional thinker who will seek new methods to control faction, identifies the need for one.

Maxwell Lykins, Bowdoin College

The Demos Liberation Front: Class Warfare in Aristotle's Politics 4-7

Can republican politics rise above the need for force? Cicero, in his famous dictum "let arms yield to the toga," argues that law's supremacy over violence is the defining mark of a republic. While Machiavelli would later invert this in the Prince, declaring that "there cannot be good laws where there are not good arms, and where there are good arms there must be good laws," this may be less of an innovation than it appears at first glance. In this paper, I argue that Aristotle uses a series of enigmatic remarks in Books 4-6 of the Politics to guide his readers to the view that the poor and middle class should be armed to resist the rich. Arms in fact create the foundation for republican politics, and actually make them more stable and just, not less. Against a view like Cicero's, Aristotle shows that republics need to reconcile themselves to the fact that force is omnipresent, and to ground their laws accordingly. As the republican revival becomes increasingly legalistic, Aristotle's insight takes on a new urgency for scholars concerned with the challenge of maintaining free societies.

Melissa Lyon, University at Albany

When Do States Erode Protections? The Case of Contemporary Child Labor in the United States

Child labor protections were born at a time of rapid expansion in the industrial economy with high demand for labor and tensions between labor and management over wages and working conditions more broadly. The creation and expansion of child labor protections rested on an emergent consensus that (a) children’s educational and physical development fell, in part, under the national interest – rather than merely familial interest – and (b) the short-run income generating needs of some families and potential for employer exploitation created the need for regulation. The national consensus solidified by the FLSA remained in place for the most part in the decades following its enactment. If anything, states and the federal government tended to expand child labor restrictions. And yet, as the saying goes, “everything old is new again.” In the past decade child labor violations in the U.S. have risen tremendously, just as numerous U.S. states have moved to weaken their child labor laws. We argue that these erosions of protections represent a pattern of policymaking driven by both group interests in national party coalitions and economic conditions. We use an original dataset of 15 types of child labor policies (2008-2024) to first describe the shifting landscape of contemporary child labor protections and establish that child labor is a contested policy domain. We then demonstrate that shifting to Republican party control when there is high labor demand causes states to weaken their child labor policies. This erosion provokes cause for concern as it occurs within a fragmented intergovernmental system that fails to clearly address hazardous and exploitative working conditions for minors.

Kieran Mabey, Yale University

"the major part": Popular Sovereignty in Hobbes's Leviathan

Since the beginning, ambition has meant ruin for mankind. Or so thought Hobbes. On his reading of Genesis, it is “the ambition of the woman” that leads the couple to disobey their rightful sovereign, God, culminating in their expulsion from Eden. This opening act in the drama of humankind proves portentous, as even in the commonwealth—that artificial Eden, created through collective human action, where the sovereign adopts the God-like task of conjuring forth order from chaos by pronouncing upon good and evil—there still, ambition remains the primary source of discontent, rebellion, and civil strife. Humans, in Hobbes’s assessment, truly are “the children of pride” (L 28.27). And the success of the King of the Proud hinges on their successfully dealing with this ineradicable, politically-problematic passion for power and precedence. Successfully dealing with ambition will entail not just brute suppression to avoid its attendant problems, but also reorientation to enjoy its potential advantages. In other words, the problem for the Sovereign posed by ambition is one of institutional design: which practices, institutions, and laws best avoid the desire for precedence from spilling over into conflict, while instead coopting this drive to ‘innovate’ and ‘reform’ so that it furthers the common good? I argue that according to Hobbes’s own *core* principles the form of government most likely to best achieve the ends of sovereignty (i.e., common peace and defense) is not monarchy, as Hobbes concludes, but democracy. The key reason democracy is to be favoured is because it is the only form of government that has the capacity to include any subject into the person of the sovereign. Insofar as democracy can accommodate a subject’s desire of office or precedence, it constitutes a satisfying, public, and universalizable way to reorient ambition, transforming ambition from the sharpest thorn to a source of support.

Kenneth Manning, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth

Judicial Appointments in the Second Trump Administration: A Tentative First Look

Four general factors determine whether chief executives can obtain a federal judiciary that is sympathetic to their political values and attitudes: ideological commitment, the number of vacancies to be filled, the president’s political clout, and the judicial climate the new judges enter. To what extent have these factors impacted the judicial appointment strategy and track record of the second Trump administration? My study will conduct a “first look” at how the Trump White House that began in January 2025 has approached its judicial appointment responsibilities and how effective it has been in shaping the direction of the federal judiciary.

Paul Manuel, Georgetown University

Weaponizing April 25: Chega, Counter-Memory, and Democratic Backsliding in Contemporary Portugal

The 50th celebration of the April 25, 1974 revolution has witnessed an intense public debate about what actually happened, with particular attention on the defeat of far left forces on 25 November, 1975. This national conversation has been marked by several attempts at historical manipulation to overshadow the significance of 25 April 1974. This paper will consider (1) the traditional understandings of the April 25 revolution; (2) the reawakening and rearticulation of Portuguese civil and political society over the past 50 years; (3) how and why current right-wing forces are trying to reconfigure historical understanding of the democratic transition, to situate the events of November 24, 1975, as significantly more important than April 25, 1974. The paper will also consider the role of collective memory in how a society understands its own history.

Alyssa Maraj Grahame, independent scholar

Financial independence: sovereignty in an age of pecuniary imperialism

This paper theorizes the often-invoked but seldom explored concept of financial independence. What is financial independence, and is it a prerequisite of sovereignty or a means for achieving genuine political autonomy? To answer these questions, the paper examines relationships between finance and efforts for independence in several contexts including the rise and fall of international banking in Iceland and Ireland, the 2014 independence referendum in Scotland, and Donald Trump's repeated overtures to "buy" Greenland from Denmark while the former debates strategies for its financial viability as a sovereign state. The paper argues that while financial independence is conventionally viewed as a necessary condition for becoming a sovereign state, it is better understood as a means by which newer and aspiring nation-states carve out recognition in a global economy dominated by proliferating financial markets. By examining the concept in ambiguous colonial contexts--current or former "internal colonies" (Hechter 1977)--the paper offers insight into what it means to be independent in a financialized world. Its findings also hold lessons and implications for a wider array of countries that have recently experienced insult to their sovereign status, such as Canada, which within the past year unexpectedly found itself reconsidering the extent and consequences of its economic ties with the US. This paper is the product of years of externally-funded field research and develops the theoretical framework for a book-length project. The author was previously faculty at Bates College and hopes to present this paper at NEPSA by way of ending a brief career disruption.

Tess Marchant-Shapiro, Southern Connecticut State University

Connections in Layered Communities: Loaves and Fishes, New Haven

This paper comprises the next installment of our ongoing study of community, how it provides a backbone for political action, and how it forms. Durkheim wrote about the propensity of groups to reinforce their boundaries by distinguishing between "us" and "them"—with a propensity toward othering. In response, public and private groups frequently deliberately support diversity, equity, and inclusion in order to ensure that all their members feel like they belong. Non-profit organizations face a particular need to promote belonging. They tend to be sponsored and/or run by privileged individuals who have the noble goal of wanting to support the needs of those who are less privileged. But such sponsorship can come at the cost of being perceived as condescending, or even "white saviors." A common approach is to involve all relevant stakeholders in the decision-making process. Loaves and Fishes, a New Haven-based food resource, faces this challenge directly. Sponsored by a largely White Episcopal congregation, it reaches out well beyond the local neighborhood to provide food and clothing throughout the region. One way it promotes a sense of belonging is by including those who are served among the volunteers who have formal roles and who help distribute the food. This structural diversity encourages connections that allow bonds to develop between participants of very different backgrounds. Through participant observation, we examine the community of volunteers and the community of clients it serves. These communities are not separable; not only do the clients provide the pantry's *raison d'être*; they also sometimes become volunteers, assisting in the work of the pantry. We analyze the ways that the pantry has maintained internal cohesion over changes in leadership, personnel, and public policy constraints over its more than 40-year history.

Wendy Martinek, Binghamton University

Amicus Curiae in State Courts of Last Resort

Amicus curiae have been demonstrated to influence both agenda setting and merits decision making in the U.S. Supreme Court. Studies of amici outside of the context of the U.S. Supreme Court, however, are few and far between. This is unfortunate for practical reasons (i.e., most cases are not adjudicated in that court) and theoretical reasons (i.e., there is virtually no institutional variation to leverage in theory building). One important reason that analyses of amicus curiae in courts other than the nation's apex court is that systematic data on their presence in most other courts is difficult to come by. In this paper, we will report preliminary findings from an on-going, large-scale project in which we are collecting information on amicus curiae in state courts of last resort.

Theodore Masthay, DeSales University

Consensus to Contention: Developments in United States Attorney Confirmations

It is a well-known phenomenon that American political elites have become more ideologically polarized over the last few decades. The most notable mechanism through which that is observed are the high rates of official party votes in Congress, which tends to diminish the influence of the minority party in each legislative chamber. However, one limited but important venue where there has been relatively little acrimony is in the Senate confirmation process of non-Cabinet and non-Supreme Court members. Confirmations to these offices have traditionally been subject to the blue slip process dominated by senatorial courtesy, which have insulated nominees from the most severe effects of partisanship. I take a closer look at how that process has broken down for the confirmations of U.S. attorneys, who are vital cogs in the machine of federal law enforcement. Nelson and Ostrander (2016) point out how the variation in rules for how those offices are filled in the absence of Senate confirmation further protects nominees from political pressure, even relative to lower court judicial nominees. I offer an update to their framework that shows since 2016, U.S. Attorneys have lost their special status as being uniquely non-partisan among Senate confirmable offices. The relatively recent growth in partisanship in the traditionally less ideological chamber has led to procedural changes such as the invocation of the so called “nuclear option” to allow for nominees to be grouped together on final votes and are not subject to the filibuster. I argue that this shift may well lead to an increase in the politicization of U.S. Attorney offices and is likely to degrade public trust in these vital institutions.

William G. Mayer, Northeastern University

The Seventh American Party System: The Realignment That Nobody Noticed

At one time or another during the last several decades, both the Republicans and the Democrats have claimed that their most recent election victory -- 2004 in the Republicans' case, 2008 for the Democrats -- was the start of a realignment and would establish their party as the dominant force in American politics for many years to come. In fact, both predictions were to a large extent falsified just two years later. Against that background, the ironic thesis of this paper is that a realignment did occur in the early 1990s -- and nobody noticed it. The elections of 1992 and 1994 radically changed the outcomes of presidential, congressional, and state government elections and thus led to numerous distinctive features of contemporary American politics.

Ayla McBreen, Georgetown University

The Weaponization of Faction: Machiavelli's Prince and the Strategic Uses of Political Division

Machiavelli's *The Prince* hides many of its most provocative truths under a pragmatic surface of statecraft. One of its disguised lessons is the utility of faction: faction is not merely a threat to political stability, it is a potential instrument of rule. This paper argues that Machiavelli departs from classical traditions that treat faction as a symptom of political decay, instead reimagining it as a tool that can be wielded to consolidate power, neutralize opposition, and reshape political order.

Kevin McGravey, Merrimack College

Between Form and Function: The Role of Unstructured Play in Democratic Education

While traditional accounts of democratic education rightly emphasize the teaching of constitutional values, they do not adequately inculcate the habits of citizenship necessary to sustain that commitment in practice. This paper examines the proper role of unstructured play in developing democratic habits. Unstructured or free play is typically defined as play that is initiated and guided by an intrinsically motivated child, without adult intervention. By drawing on democratic theory, American political thought and empirical research on unstructured play, the paper argues that such engagement can play a critical role in developing the norms and habits necessary for effective democratic citizenship. In particular, the paper suggests that a combination of traditional development of liberal democratic values combined with unstructured play is needed to build both the proper understanding of norms of citizenship and a stronger commitment to them.

Jim McHugh, University of Akron

Canadian Soft Power and Paradiplomacy

Canadian soft power has been an historically important and effective tool of its international relations strategy. Yet Canada's recent governments have failed to continue to promote traditional sources of soft power. Diplomatic activities and paradiplomacy have both been an institutional tool for dissemination of Canadian soft power, including even the protodiplomatic activity of Quebec, though it was applied toward very different goals. With the decline in the diplomatic propagation of Canadian soft power tools, paradiplomacy has provided an opportunity to make up this deficiency. Given the historical low cost, as well as relative effectiveness of Canada's soft power initiatives, the Canadian government would be well-served to restore those initiatives, not only despite an environment of budgetary austerity but, ironically, because of that austerity, given the cost effectiveness of soft power as a foreign policy tool and its institutional dissemination in advancing Canada's international relations aspirations.

Michael McKinney, independent scholar

The Political Security Dilemma: A Framework of Favored Values and Forgotten Virtues in the American Political System.

This paper explores the concept of the political security dilemma within the context of the American political system, highlighting tensions between competing values and the neglect of foundational virtues essential to democratic governance. Drawing from leadership, organizational, and political theory; historical analysis; and contemporary case studies; the paper introduces a framework to understand how the prioritization of favored values—such as economic efficiency, national security, or individual liberty—often marginalizes equally critical forgotten virtues, like civic responsibility, empathy, and justice. This imbalance exacerbates political polarization, undermines institutional trust, and fuels a cycle of reactive policy-making that prioritizes immediate gains over long-term stability. The framework reveals how these dynamics manifest in skewed debates over voting rights, public accountability, and political representation, offering insights into the systemic risks posed by value-driven and zero-sum game conflicts. By reframing political priorities to reintegrate neglected virtues, the paper advocates for strategies to mitigate the political security dilemma and promote a more resilient, equitable, and just democratic system. Levels of analysis: 1. Micro-level: the physical office, the administration, and individual teams of influence ... 2. Meso-level: the political party (leaders and followers, i.e., community) ... 3. Macro-level: the political system and the state.

Scott McLean, Quinnipiac University

The COVID-19 Lockdown in the Political Psychology of Generation Z

This paper straddles the fields of political theory, psychology and American voting behavior. After a review of theories of how historical crises and collective memory can shape the trajectory of youth socialization and forms of political engagement. The paper focuses on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the political behavior and collective memory of Generation Z. GenZ will be a pivotal voting bloc in the elections of 2026 and 2028, and their turnout and party support being critical to any candidate's strategy on the road to the White House. While no definitive predictions of youth turnout and vote preference is offered, the paper will outline historically-informed framing of current trends and tendencies.

Martin Mendoza-Botelho, Eastern Connecticut State University

Political realignment in the Andes. A story of pragmatism, optimism but modest change

The ongoing processes of political realignment in the Andean region have shown an ideological shift, from left-wing, nationalist governments that dominated the early twenty-first century towards a pragmatic, center-right market-friendly approach. Focusing on Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador, this paper argues that despite the arrival of new presidents with significant electoral support, the overall political structure in these countries have not changed dramatically as anticipated. Moreover, these presidents arrive at times of economic hardship, making very difficult for them to make ideological stands. Instead, their efforts have focused on governance strategies focused on fiscal discipline, macroeconomic stability and foreign investment expansion, but maintaining existing elements of social redistribution. An important external element to consider is the price decline and/or resource scarcity in some of their key commodities since 2014, which has made the previous socialist-leaning and state-led models less viable. What is evident, however, is that some of the economic gains of the previous administrations allowed the emergence of incipient, albeit fragile, middle-class, with higher expectations for economic prosperity, favoring security over ideological confrontations. It is also important to notice the political fragmentation and institutional volatility in all these cases, noticeable in Peru's rotating presidencies, Ecuador's efforts to readjust their constitution and Bolivia's post-Morales and post-Arce Catacora's recalibration. This works contends that the recent Andean political realignment does not necessarily signals the collapse of the left, but instead in a political transformation that favors pragmatism over ideology. The challenges of the governments in these countries is to blend social inclusion and the protection of the economic gains, particularly those of the poorest segments of the population, with pragmatic and effective market engagement. This new hybrid model raises questions on how sustainable these new proposed economic and political objectives align with reality, testing along the way the resilience of their democratic institutions.

Susan Moffitt, Brown University

The Politics of Administrative Ease

What political and administrative resources contribute to the operationalization of rights in the United States? We examine this puzzle in the context of disability rights in schools by measuring the administrative ease of accessing local special education information: the extent to which governments actively reduce learning costs and make information accessible. To measure administrative ease for special education information, we develop a novel web crawler that approximates the human experience of navigating school district websites and apply it to public school districts in four states. The crawler measures whether special education information is present, how long it takes to find the information, how long the navigational pathway is, and what terminology districts use to describe services. We use these measures in an assessment of administrative ease, finding wide variation across districts and states. We find that over 80 percent of districts provide at least one page referencing special education, however, the pathway complexity, search time, and terminology differ substantially. Situating these patterns within a political market framework, we show how supply-side capacity and demand-side pressures jointly contribute to the accessibility of rights-relevant information. We conclude by discussing implications for the design of administrative systems that support the realization of rights beyond education.

Michael Moltz, Shippensburg University

A Cross-National Analysis of Work-Life Balance and Public Administrator Turnover Intentions

This study investigates two central research questions. First, to what extent does work-life balance influence a public employee's intention to leave their job? Second, do country-level characteristics account for cross-national differences in public sector turnover intentions? These questions engage a growing concern in public administration: the capacity of government organizations to recruit, hire, and retain a skilled and motivated workforce. Issues of attraction, selection, and retention are frequently examined within the broader person-environment fit literature. Public management scholarship, in particular, highlights how employee motivations relate to turnover intentions. Prior research suggests that individuals who prioritize intrinsic values in their work tend to experience greater satisfaction with their work context, which in turn reduces the likelihood of expressing intentions to quit. Yet, relatively little attention has been given to how work-life balance contributes to public employee turnover intentions, especially in comparative, cross-national settings. To analyze the connection between work-life balance and turnover intentions among public employees, this project utilizes data from the International Social Survey Programme's 2015 Work Orientations IV survey, which consists of nationally representative samples from over 30 countries. To examine the impact of country-level factors, key indicators of labor market conditions are incorporated using data from the World Bank. The analysis applies multilevel logistic regression to assess models that include both individual-level and country-level predictors.

Chloe Morgado, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Empire of Code: Palantir Technologies, Techno-Nationalism, and the Authoritarian Turn in U.S. Digital Governance

This article examines how Palantir Technologies became a central instrument of American techno-nationalism during the Trump administration, functioning as both a material infrastructure and an ideological symbol of sovereign power in the digital age. Through a close analysis of Palantir's deployment across three domains of immigration enforcement, pandemic management, and military intelligence, it explores how the company became a pivotal component of American techno-nationalism. I argue that the Trump-era federal government outsourced critical governance functions to a firm ideologically aligned with techno-libertarian nationalism and structurally embedded in predictive surveillance. Drawing on theories of digital sovereignty, platform imperialism, and infrastructural power, I demonstrate how Palantir's entanglement with the state has blurred public-private boundaries and laid the groundwork for an emergent form of platform-enabled authoritarianism. While framed as patriotic innovation in service of national security, Palantir's rise reflects a more profound shift in American statecraft: from bureaucratic accountability to algorithmic opacity, and from democratic deliberation to data-driven control. This case contributes to broader debates on digital constitutionalism, privatized governance, and the weaponization of data in liberal democracies.

Gia Mosashvili, New York University, Harvard University

Utilitarianism in Crisis: Can Governments Still Provide “the Greatest Good for the Greatest Number” amid the Tragedy of the Commons?

Utilitarianism has long served as a moral foundation of statehood. Modern constitutions—the normative core of governance—were shaped by Enlightenment moral philosophy, particularly the utilitarian conviction that the legitimacy of the state rests on its capacity to provide “the greatest good for the greatest number.” Yet this moral framework, conceived in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, now faces a profound crisis. This paper asks: How can governments founded on utilitarian principles sustain moral legitimacy when confronting twenty-first-century global challenges such as climate change and cyberwarfare? The study hypothesizes that utilitarianism, while historically effective as a moral justification for governance and law, has become increasingly incompatible with a world defined by interdependence, technological acceleration, and resource depletion. Drawing on Garrett Hardin’s *Tragedy of the Commons*, the paper demonstrates that when governments pursue utility maximization within finite ecological or digital systems, rational policy choices by individual actors or states produce collective harm rather than collective good. This dynamic undermines both material sustainability and moral coherence, culminating in what Jürgen Habermas characterizes as a legitimation crisis—a collapse of public trust and moral justification in state authority. Employing a comparative qualitative design supplemented by quantitative elements, the research integrates political theory, moral philosophy, and policy analysis. Using primary, secondary, and tertiary sources, it compares climate and cybersecurity governance to show how utilitarian assumptions fail under conditions of scarcity, complexity, and interdependence.

Tassiana Moura de Oliveira, University at Albany, SUNY

Environmental Injustice and Anti-Crime Governance: Are Courts Ignoring Environmental Harm in Brazil’s Favelas?

As Brazil intensifies policies to curb organized crime—through militarized policing, territorial incursions, and expanded prosecutorial action—an urgent question arises: are courts confronting the environmental injustice produced by these interventions in favelas and urban peripheries? While climate litigation has become a central arena for addressing socio-environmental emergencies, the overlap between public security actions and racialized environmental harm remains understudied. This work builds on the focus on territorial patterns of climate-litigation responses and shifts the lens to Brazil’s urban margins, where Black and poor communities disproportionately live. Despite constitutional guarantees of environmental protection and reparation, favela residents routinely face environmental hazards—landslides, floods, sewage overflow, toxic waste exposure, and infrastructure collapse—conditions often aggravated by policing operations that damage homes, disrupt services, and reshape fragile ecosystems. Yet these communities rarely appear in the emerging national map of climate litigation, suggesting unequal access to courts and to environmental remedies. This paper is going to look into the Brazilian Council of Justice category of climate change and socio-environmental cases, to understand if and how courts are dealing with cumulative environmental impacts that disproportionately burden racialized territories. The paper aims to expand comparative debates on environmental justice, prosecutorial action, and the limits of judicialization in contexts marked by climate risk, state violence, and deepening urban inequality.

Leah Mueller, University of Vermont

Conflicting fairness ideas in living wage law conflicts: Investigating the DC Large Retailer Accountability Act

Living wage laws are at the heart of political conflicts over income inequality and economic justice. This paper analyzes the controversy over a distinctive living wage law focused on large retailers like Wal Mart for new insights into the underlying fairness principles used by both sides as well as new options for promoting living wage policies. As living expenses continue to outpace minimum wage rates the predominant type of living wage policy mandates all city employees (including subcontracted private employees) are paid a living wage based on an annual calculation. This paper analyzes a different type of living wage policy that focuses on large retailers through a detailed case study of Washington, D.C.'s 2013 Large Retailer Accountability Act (LRAA). To understand the political process and distinctive fairness arguments affecting the introduction and eventual failure of the LRAA, we utilize city council records, news articles, press releases, advocacy group public statements, and related published research. Our analysis finds that the debate over the LRAA was framed in terms of fair distribution of wealth for workers versus personal liberty for employers as well as the unfairness of singling out one type of employer for higher wages. Our findings indicate that singling out large employers for living wage requirements may dilute fairness arguments while still giving companies that ability to leverage beliefs about unequal treatment of employers, as well as the threat of denying improved access to food and economic development to undermine these policies.

Elizabeth Muller, Providence College

Diasporic Belonging of Palestinian American Women in New England

In wake of the turmoil that has ensued for decades in Palestine, many Palestinians migrated to the United States forming diasporic communities. The diasporic communities in New England are miniscule in comparison to the vast communities in places such as California and Illinois, however they provide unique insights into the lives of Palestinian American women in more rural areas of the United States. Through in-depth qualitative oral history interviews of Palestinian American women living in New England, this research sought to answer the question, "How do Palestinian American women negotiate their gendered and racialized identity in New England?" Although New England is touted as a progressive region of the United States, the interviews revealed that there is a subtle and indirect form of racism that exists in the region, creating a hostile environment for finding belonging. Despite this, Palestinian American women continue to find solidarity with Indigenous tribes, transmit their culture, share their life stories, and engage in direct activism. The major finding of the data collected is that Palestinian American women in New England form their identity through an interactional lens. They use the voices they have found through their experiences in the United States to speak out against the destruction of their culture and the mistreatment of their people. This finding pushes back against harmful stereotypes that Muslim/Arab women are submissive, and shows that in reality, their existence is political. Understanding the nuances of identity formation for Palestinian American women in New England is crucial for public policy makers who want to support marginalized communities in the region.

Adam Myers, Providence College

The Centralization of Town Government in New England, 1979-2025

The New England town meeting has long been America's most heralded institution of local direct democracy, but modern challenges have put this unique system of governance under stress. We collect data from municipalities across the New England States regarding the use of the open town meeting and its declining relevance as a growing number of New England towns centralize core functions of town government in their executives. We find that a key factor influencing town centralization decisions is the increased financial dependence of New England municipalities on state governments, which has led to a greater need for technocratic knowledge of intergovernmental relations.

Samuel Nani, Clark Atlanta University

Africa and the Neoliberal Order: Towards Africa's World Order

This paper examines how Africa's incorporation into the neoliberal order, whose architecture was laid without the continent's input, has systematically constrained the continent's capacity to pursue independent economic policies that address the needs and wants of its citizens. In effect, the IMF and the World Bank-led reforms through the structural adjustment programs (SAPs) worsened Africa's economic prospects by privileging what Joseph Stiglitz termed as "theories over lives". Thus, the austerity measures implemented through the structural adjustment programs prioritized macroeconomic stability over economic welfare of ordinary Africans widening poverty and inequality gap on the continent. Again, trade liberalization has weakened Africa's manufacturing sector, crippling any possibility of industrial revolution on the continent. To address these imbalances, the paper proposes people-centered realism framework which redefines Africa's national interest around the economic and political developmental welfare needs of Africans. People-centered realism is grounded on four pillars. First is involving the citizens in foreign policy formation; granting of mineral concessions and ratification of international agreements. Second is resolving the domestic problems and the third is state intervention and protection of key sectors of the economy and finally, seeking pan African dominance and orienting all citizens to do so. This paradigm shift is necessary in constructing an order that reflects and addresses the economic and political issues on the continent to elevate its position within the international system.

Hyesang Noh, University at Albany, SUNY

Who Comments and What Narratives They Tell: Voice and Power in Immigrant Welfare Rulemaking

Public commenting is one way that the public can be involved in the policymaking process. While many studies examine how and when federal agencies exercise their discretion, less attention has been paid to which narratives and social identities prevail during the process and whether they influence the final rule. In this paper, I focus on the "public charge rule," which underwent significant changes under both the Trump and Biden administrations. Since the Department of Justice first administratively defined "public charge" in 1999 as an alien who has become or is likely to become dependent on government subsistence (such as cash assistance and long-term institutional care), there have been ongoing efforts to reinterpret the term. During its first term, the Trump administration sought to expand the definition by including non-cash benefits, then the Biden administration later rolled back these changes, returning to the 1999 interpretation. During the rulemaking process during the Trump and Biden presidencies, the Department of Homeland Security received approximately 266,000 public comments. In this paper, I examine how discourse about immigrants is shaped by the public, who participates in the process, and which comments are ultimately adopted by the agency. I plan to undertake this analysis by examining approximately 64,000 publicly available comments through supervised text analysis. By investigating 200 randomly selected comments to create a codebook, I preliminarily find that the vast majority oppose the rule (172 comments), and that 42 comments include identified personal identities, mostly prominently health professionals, educators, religious identities, immigration statuses, and civic or political roles. Policy narratives and other themes will be further refined as the codebook is finalized. Once the codebook is complete, I will manually code a randomly selected training dataset and run a supervised learning model to label the full set of comments.

Tatishe Nteta, University of Massachusetts Amherst

They Not Like Us? Veterans, Hostile Sexism, and Vote Choice in American Presidential Elections

Research on U.S. veterans' political behavior consistently shows that past military service has a limited impact on vote choice in U.S. elections (Teigen 2007; Lythgoe 2020). While this work has challenged the assumption of a distinct "veteran vote", we note that these studies fail to examine the individual and contextual factors that may uniquely shape the voter preferences of veterans, particularly in more recent presidential elections. Most notably, recent scholarship on the armed forces has found that hostile sexism helps to account for negative evaluations of female leadership (Phelan et al. 2024), which suggests that hostile sexism may be an important factor in shaping veterans' candidate preferences in elections featuring women candidates. Using the 2016-2024 Cooperative Election Study, we leverage the variability in the gender of Democratic presidential candidates to examine whether the "veteran vote" is more likely to emerge in presidential contests featuring woman candidates, and test the role of hostile sexism in uniquely influencing veteran vote choice.

Feryaz Ocakli, Skidmore College

Migration, Food Security, and Informal Finance: Afghan Refugees and Survival Networks

This paper examines how Afghan refugees use the informal money transfer system known as the hawala to survive amid displacement, exclusion from formal banking, and the securitization of their mobility. Based on interviews with refugees and regional experts, it argues that hawala acts as a system of survival, trusted not only because of its low fees and speed, but because it is embedded in community, obligation, and transnational solidarity. The framing of Afghan refugee flows as security threats has paradoxically increased their reliance on hawala, which is itself framed as a tool of terrorist financing and money laundering. By re-situating hawala as a mechanism of a social economy of care rather than threat, this paper contributes to debates on informal finance and forced migration, and endorses a reassessment of academic and policy approaches that treat financial informality as inherently suspect.

Glory Okereke, Florida International University

Weaponizing Energy: States Use of Oil and Gas as Tools of Political Coercion

This paper asks when energy-exporting states can use oil and gas as a weapon to change other states' behavior. It focuses on moments when exporters cut or threatened to cut energy supplies in order to gain political concessions. Using ideas from interdependence, geo-economics, and energy security, the paper defines "energy weaponization" as the deliberate use of energy disruptions to pressure other governments. The study uses a qualitative small-N comparison of key cases, especially Russia's use of natural gas against Ukraine and the European Union, and the 1973 Arab oil embargo. In each case, it traces what happened during the crisis and whether the target state changed its policy. The analysis focuses on four main conditions: how dependent the target is on the exporter, how easily it can find substitutes, how resilient it is at home, and how much cost the exporter is willing to bear. The paper also considers how failed coercion can push states to diversify and reduce future vulnerability.

Masako Okura, Columbus State University

"Manufacturing Crisis in Japan: Sanseito's Populist Breakthrough and the Politics of Purity"

A dramatic change in Japan's political landscape was underway in July 2025. A public opinion survey showed support for Sanseito, a far-right populist party, surging more than fivefold in a short period of time. Historically, some scholars have characterized Japan as less susceptible to populism—let alone right-wing populism—unlike those nations in the EU, Latin America, or the United States where the rise of far-right populism has fundamentally questioned the sustainability of democracy. Consequently, seminal works on comparative populism customarily excluded Japan from the focus of analysis. However, Japan is no longer immune to the global rise of populism and populist messages full of conspiracy theories, xenophobic rhetoric, and hard-line foreign policies. What accounts for the Sanseito's breakthrough? This paper examines supply-side factors that enabled Sanseito's dramatic rise in public support, using Benjamin Moffitt's "populism as political performance" framework. Through analysis of campaign speeches, party platforms, and social media content, three distinctive mechanisms emerged beyond the cultural and economic grievances documented in other national contexts. First, Sanseito exploited Japan's restrictive media environment through a dual strategy: benefiting from strict defamation laws while simultaneously performing anti-establishment rhetoric that weaponized any media criticism as proof of elite corruption. Second, the party manufactured a "foreigners crisis" by incorporating overtourism—reframing it not as economic disruption but as cultural violation and disrespect for Japanese social norms. Third, textual analysis reveals Sanseito strategically utilized purity (junketsu) as a bridge term connecting voters to nationalist politics. By applying purity discourse to organic food, food self-sufficiency, and Japanese cultural identity, the party appealed to health-conscious mothers and food safety advocates into an exclusionary "Japanese First" framework. This case contributes to understanding how populist movements can succeed even in contexts previously thought resistant.

Samuel Olufeso, University of Massachusetts Lowell

Strategic Silencing: Disinformation, Surveillance, and Shutdowns in the Politics of Protest Deterrence

This study examines how disaggregated metrics of digital repression, specifically disinformation, internet shutdowns, and surveillance, shape offline protest mobilization in non-democratic regimes. Drawing on a cross-national panel dataset and employing two-way fixed effects linear models, the analysis reveals that government-sponsored disinformation consistently and significantly suppresses protest activity, even after accounting for regime type and structural covariates. In contrast, internet shutdowns and social media surveillance exhibit context-dependent effects, varying in magnitude and significance across model specifications. Interaction models further suggest that the repressiveness of disinformation is amplified in non-democratic settings, where institutional constraints on narrative manipulation are weak or absent. To disentangle within- and between-country dynamics, a hybrid fixed effects approach isolates temporal deviations from national averages, confirming that within-country increases in disinformation are strongly associated with reduced protest mobilization. These findings signal a shift in the logic of authoritarian control, from visible coercion to anticipatory narrative suppression. Rather than merely silencing dissent, regimes increasingly preempt it through information distortion and legitimacy management. By reconceptualizing digital repression as a strategic and adaptive governance tool, the study contributes to emerging scholarship on digital authoritarianism, protest deterrence, and the cross-border diffusion of repressive technologies and narratives.

Sohyon Pak, University of Massachusetts Boston

Origin of Wealth among Asian/Asian-Americans: International Remittances

People from China, India, the Philippines, Vietnam, Korea, and Japan make up the largest share of the U.S. Asian/Asian-American population (Krogstad & Im, 2025). As more than half of the Asian/Asian-American population are immigrants, their financial relationship with family and friends are dynamic and they often help on each other during the time of financial hardships. For many Asian/Asian-American, financial support flows not only within the United States, but also across national borders in the form of personal remittances (Hipsher, 2020). While Asian/Asian-American households exhibit the widest wealth disparity within their group (Weller & Thompson, 2018), they also have the greatest average wealth among all racial groups in the United States (Urban Institute, 2025). I will examine the origin of wealth beyond income and investment within the United States. Specifically, I will focus on international remittance inflows from Asian countries to the United States. To conduct this research, I will use three datasets: the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) for information on wealth and other demographic characteristics of Asian and Asian American populations; the Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development (KNOMAD), a World Bank–hosted initiative that collects international remittance and migration statistics, including bilateral remittance data by country; and the American Community Survey (ACS) to collect information on immigrant populations. I will use two years of datasets, 2018 and 2022, since KNOMAD bilateral personal remittance information is only available for those years.

Sobia Paracha, Syracuse University

Nationalism and Political Contestation in Pakistan's Territorial Disputes

This paper challenges traditional International Relations (IR) theories by arguing that national attachment to territorial disputes in Pakistan is a dynamic, malleable construct, not a static driver of conflict. Focusing on the Kashmir dispute and the Durand Line, the paper demonstrates how domestic elite competition and shifting media narratives shape public perception, causing disputes to be sustained, politicized, or deprioritized over time. Methodologically, the study employs Natural Language Processing (NLP) models on an exclusive dataset from Dawn (1997–2004). This analysis uncovers linguistic patterns reflecting how elites frame disputes during politically significant junctures, such as a military coup, nuclear testing, and 9/11. The paper contributes to debates on nationalism by reframing national attachment as a context-dependent factor. By linking this theoretical innovation with original empirical data, it bridges comparative politics and IR, emphasizing the importance of examining regionally specific dynamics in post-colonial states. This highlights new approaches for understanding territorial disputes globally.

Girma Parris, Case Western Reserve University

Why All the Claims of Objectivity from the Partisan Media: Path Dependency, Drift, Conversion, Layering, and the Standard of Objectivity

Elite and mass critiques of the contemporary news media suggest the core problem is recapturing a lost ideal: the standard of objectivity (OS). OS refers to the journalistic ideal of providing a detached, neutral, impartial rendering of political news. Politicians on the right but increasingly on the left run against the news media both on the campaign trail and as governors. Public opinion polls have shown public trust of the media below 40% since the first decade of the 21st century. Criticism centers around the problems of biased media, implying objectivity is the normative ideal. Consensus among media observers is that the news media has become more partisan over the last two decades. Yet most news media professionals/outlets promote themselves as objective despite being conspicuously not. How has OS maintained this normative hegemony despite these countervailing trends? Treating OS as an institutional order, this paper employs four theoretic concepts of institutional change – path dependency, drift, conversion and layering – to discuss the evolution of the standard of objectivity. Through process tracing and close rendering of secondary sources, the paper interrogates OS’s historical trajectory to bring into relief some reasons why it is still the normative paradigm despite the news media’s loss of public and elite trust.

Natalie Pennisi, McGill University

Affective Reciprocal Vulnerability: A Sentimental Solution to Societal Precarity

Theorists identify emotions as an essential component of human vulnerability. This paper seeks to amend Catherine Lu’s concept of reciprocal vulnerability to directly address how emotions can help people develop a sense of joint stakes in the suffering of others. To start, I address the idea of reciprocal vulnerability and provide my interpretation of it. Simply put, reciprocal vulnerability is the creation of shared stakes in issues of vulnerability through institutional arrangements. After that, I address three weaknesses of the concept: its feasibility, its morality, and its inadequate integration of emotions. With that in mind, I propose an amendment to her concept called affective reciprocal vulnerability, which contends that our emotional investment in the plight of our loved ones creates emotional shared stakes in issues of injustice, therefore encouraging societal change. I also consider some potential objections to my idea by weighing how feasible it would be and if successfully doing so would even affect broad societal change given how narrow our most intimate social circles can be. I conclude by discussing the power of political emotions, circles of sympathy, and the importance of a moral education.

Natalie Pennisi, McGill University

Does Sympathy Enlighten? On the Relationship between Sympathy, Solidarity, and Injustice

Drawing inspiration from the Enlightenment’s tradition of ethics, moral psychology, and political philosophy, this project examines the concept of “sympathy” to illuminate its contemporary relevance and relationship to political change. In particular, it explores whether or not sympathy functions as a tool for political justice, or if it functions to entrench injustice further. More specifically, this paper seeks to answer the following questions: (1) What is sympathy, and what are its political consequences? (2) When it comes to politics, is sympathy more likely to facilitate positive outcomes, like solidarity, or negative ones, like structural injustice? To complete this project, I use key texts from the history of political thought that are pertinent to this topic to understand contemporary normative issues. More specifically, I draw upon important works to define the concept of sympathy and elucidate its political functions and consequences, such as Adam Smith and David Hume’s definitions of sympathy from *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* and *Treatise on Human Nature*, respectively. Borrowing from the Enlightenment’s tradition regarding sympathy is useful for my political theoretical project due to the moral-psychological significance that thinkers such as Smith and Hume ascribed to it. Their treatment of sympathy and examination of its relevance to human nature provides a rich basis for the exploration of contemporary political issues. In particular, the passages where Smith discusses our predisposition to lend our sympathy to the wealthy feel more timely than ever. Furthermore, I mobilize historical case studies, such as the example of “Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners,” to examine key ideas and arguments I advance, as well as empirical studies from political scientists who consider the role of empathy in political decision-making.

Joseph Peschek, Hamline University

Trump 2.0: Is There a Trump Doctrine in Foreign Policy?

In a recently published book, I characterized “Trumpism” as a form of right-wing politics, melding certain blends of populism, nationalism, and authoritarianism with uninhibited and even predatory or patrimonial pro-capitalist economic and social policies. How do these features of Trumpian politics inform the foreign policy of Trump’s second presidency? Does the foreign policy of Donald Trump’s second presidency rest on coherent strategic and ideological foundations, or is it driven more by impulse and personalistic domestic political considerations? What patterns of both continuity and change does Trump’s second presidency foreign policy exhibit with respect to his first presidency foreign policy and to the positions of the pre-Trump “foreign policy establishment”? I address these questions through an examination of key foreign policy actions under Trump 2.0, and the ideas and rhetoric that accompany them, including trade and tariffs, conflict management towards the fighting in Gaza and Ukraine, and policies centering on immigration, drugs, and U.S. power in Latin America.

Paul Petterson, Central Connecticut State University

In The Place Where It Started: How Bernie Sanders' Time As Mayor of Burlington, Vermont Shaped His National Politics

While U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders has become a widely recognized and influential political figure in recent years, the first step on his political rise was his improbable election as Mayor of Burlington, Vermont, in March 1981, where he served for 4 terms (1981-1989) as the Mayor of Vermont's largest city. What lessons did Sanders learn from his service as Mayor? How did they shape his later service in the U.S. House and U.S. Senate? Are there larger lessons to be learned from Sanders' local record as Mayor, for Democrats and progressives navigating the political currents of 2026 and beyond? This paper will explore these questions.

David Plazek, Vermont State University

Realist or liberal? Pierre Trudeau's time as Prime Minister

This paper assesses Pierre Elliot Trudeau's foreign policy while Prime Minister. Realist and Liberal theories are applied to Canada's foreign policy behaviors during this period to see which performs best.

Joseph Popcun, University at Albany, SUNY

Policy Entropy: The Drift toward Ordinary Policy Failure in 10 States

Policy failure research has long focused on spectacular breakdowns, often the dramatic collapses that attract media attention and external inquiry. Yet practitioners describe a different reality: routine, expected dysfunctions that accumulate unseen, consuming organizational capacity until systems drift toward disorder. Drawn from a larger study of the subnational policy process, this paper introduces policy entropy as a framework for understanding how ordinary failures compound into systemic decay. The analysis draws on 41 elite interviews with New York State executives, validated through 9 additional interviews with practitioners across diverse jurisdictions including North Carolina, Colorado, Montana, Georgia, Arizona, Tennessee, Illinois, Washington D.C., and Maine. This research generates theory from deep engagement with one state's policy ecosystems while testing generalizability across varied political, fiscal, and administrative contexts. The paper's central finding identifies organizational culture as entropy's primary moderator. Through a 2×2 matrix of environmental pressure ("hot" vs. "cool") and organizational culture ("thick" vs. "thin"), I demonstrate that neither factor alone determines outcomes. Their interaction, however, creates predictable patterns: thick cultures absorb pressure through bounded autonomy, psychological safety, and learning routines while thin cultures amplify it through blame avoidance, concentrated control, and decision paralysis. Four observable indicators (i.e., decision time, rework rate, maintenance abandonment, and shadow system primacy) operationalize entropy as empirical evidence. Cross-state validation supports that these dynamics operate as structural features of the policy process rather than artifacts of New York's unique arrangement. Practitioners independently described the theoretical constructs, achieving near-universal agreement on core entropy mechanics while showing meaningful variation in manifestation and severity. Together, the paper findings extend administrative burden scholarship by revealing how burden accumulates bidirectionally, degrading both citizen experience and practitioner capacity through reinforcing feedback that constitute entropy's signature.

Vanessa Portillo, Central Connecticut State University

Threads of Resilience and A legacy of Displacement

This research explores the historical and personal dimensions of displacement, ethnocide, and cultural erasure in El Salvador, tracing how national policies and systemic violence shaped both collective histories and my own family's trajectory. Drawing on genealogical records alongside scholarly works, I connect the experiences of my ancestors, the Cerén, Molina, Valladares, Bolanos, and Portillo families, to broader patterns of land privatization, political repression, and forced migration. The study argues that the displacement of Indigenous and rural communities was not an unintended consequence of modernization, but a deliberate strategy of governance. From the colonial systems of *encomienda* and *congregación*, to the liberal land reforms of 1881 that extinguished communal holdings, and culminating in the 1932 massacre known as La Matanza, state and elite projects sought to dispossess Indigenous peoples while erasing their cultural presence. These policies were later reinforced through Cold War militarization and U.S. intervention, embedding exclusion into the fabric of Salvadoran society. My family's archival records illustrate these processes vividly. Within a single generation, relatives shifted from being documented as *indio* to *ladino*, a transformation not of cultural choice, but of survival in the aftermath of ethnocidal violence. These silences and adaptations, carried forward across generations, reveal how erasure is lived and remembered within families. By bridging personal history with national scholarship, this project challenges the enduring myth that El Salvador is an "Indian-free" nation. It demonstrates that Indigenous heritage persists in names, places, and memories, even after centuries of repression. More broadly, it calls for recognition that historical acknowledgment is inseparable from cultural survival, and that reclaiming erased stories is a necessary step toward justice and belonging.

Daniel Post, United States Naval War College

"Choosing to use nuclear weapons: How choice sets affect decisions in a nuclear crisis"

This study examines how decisions about nuclear retaliation in crisis scenarios are sensitive to the choices offered. Using a U.S.-based survey experiment, participants — acting as the U.S. president — responded to a simulated Russian nuclear strike. Decisions were found to be highly sensitive to the available options — that is, the choice set. When offered only retaliatory nuclear strikes, most participants selected one. Adding a "no launch" or write-in option significantly reduced support for retaliation. Justifications varied. Across experimental conditions, participants who focused on military strategy opted for retaliation; those who focused on humanitarian concerns shifted away from nuclear use when given alternatives. Choices were also linked to gender, political affiliation, and punitive disposition. These results suggest that a decision maker's preferences in a nuclear crisis are not stable, but constructed in-the-moment and shaped by context. These findings highlight the need for policies reflecting the psychological vulnerabilities inherent in managing nuclear weapons.

Bridget Quiroga, University of Connecticut

Exploring How Social Movements Influence the Right to Education for Undocumented Students

Since the landmark court case *Plyler v. Doe* of 1982, undocumented children in the United States have had the right to access public free primary education. This thesis explores the initial language of protections granted under *Plyler* for undocumented students, analyzing how social movements both on the right and the left reinforce or attack this rights framing. Movements on the right are opposed to *Plyler* and movements on the left are supportive of it. I explore their framing of the political issue of access to education for children regardless of citizenship status. I analyze the evolution of social mobilization related to *Plyler* focusing on the activities of key social movement organizations on the right and the left from 2005 to the present day. I assess how their framing of this issue has changed over time. Using social movement theory, I determine how these competing groups have utilized political opportunities, mobilizing structures, and framing to uphold or erode *Plyler* and their degrees of success in doing so. My goal is to understand why some movements are more effective in utilizing political opportunities, mobilizing structures, and framing than others. The implication of my findings shed light on whether conservative framings threaten *Plyler*, and ultimately undocumented students' access to public education in the United States.

Katie Rader, University at Albany, SUNY

“Equalizing” Labor Law? Postwar Retrenchment and The Taft-Hartley Act

Riding the coattails of an unpopular strike wave in 1946, conservatives in Congress finally achieved their decade-long goal of reshaping New Deal labor policy with the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947. Among the most widely contested restrictions, the Taft-Hartley outlawed the closed shop, eliminated secondary boycotts, wildcat, and solidarity strikes, empowered states to craft their own right-to-work laws, and required union officials to sign anti-communist affidavits. Despite organized labor’s fears that the law would undermine the organizing efforts of the previous ten years, union density continued to climb in the years following the passage of Taft-Hartley, leading to great scholarly debate over the law’s impact. In this paper, we intervene in this debate by comparing the impact of the policy on AFL- versus CIO-affiliated unions in the years following its enactment. In particular, we explore whether several of the core labor “equalizing” provisions in the law, ostensibly meant to level the playing field between business and labor, had a more significant impact on CIO unions than their AFL counterparts. Through an examination of administrative data on elections, unfair labor practice cases, and court injunctions, we provide a clearer picture of Taft-Hartley’s impact on labor organizing and the impact of postwar retrenchment in labor policy on union organizing.

David Rezvani, College of the Holy Cross

Independence or Partial Independence For Greenland?

In 2025, President Trump refused to rule out force and economic coercion to compel Greenland to become part of America. Mr. Trump’s expressions of territorial expansionism were rejected as “absurd” by Denmark’s Prime Minister when he first proposed the idea in 2016. Similar statements have also been made by America’s own EU allies as well as Greenland’s First Minister, who declared that the territory is “not for sale”. Nevertheless, Trump’s assertions underscore that even in modern times, having an expanded territory can provide economic, strategic, and political advantages for states (like Denmark and the US). It is therefore worth examining how Denmark’s existing deal with Greenland compares to full independence as well as the alternatives that the US has provided to its own nationalistically distinct populations. With regard to this, some scholars assert that full independence best fulfills the interests of Greenland’s people. They contend that such an outcome delivers a type of logic of appropriateness and dignity that is not available through the territory’s current status. By contrast, this paper will argue that Greenland’s population is better served by maintaining its existing partially independent arrangement with Denmark. The paper will make use of a logic of consequences to argue that partial independence delivers a better political, economic, and security outcome for the territory than either full independence or union with the US.

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Jesse Rhodes, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Is there a Gender Penalty in Evaluations of Aging Elected Officials? Evidence from a Survey Experiment

Compared to those serving in many democracies, American politicians are unusually elderly. Increasingly, many Americans perceive the advanced age of American politicians as a problem, even leading to growing public support for an age limit for public office. But are attitudes about the nation's aging political leadership influenced by sexism? On the one hand, Americans' traditional skepticism toward female leadership might result in a penalty for older women elected officials. On the other hand, the prominence of aging male elected officials - especially presidents Joe Biden and Donald Trump - might lead Americans to express greater skepticism toward elderly male leaders. In this study, we use a survey experiment on a nationally representative sample of American adults to investigate whether a gender penalty exists in Americans' attitudes toward aging elected officials and, if so, in which direction the penalty falls. In our experiment, we ask respondents to review the characteristics and records of a hypothetical elderly same-party senator, which are held constant except for gender, which is randomized. We then ask respondents to indicate their willingness to vote for the senator, their perceptions of the senator's leadership and competence, and their support for an age maximum for Senate service. The results of our study will shed light on the nature and scope of the gender penalty in Americans' evaluation of elderly political leaders.

ASM Safwan Rob, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Detecting Strategic Ambiguity in Congressional Self-Regulation: AI-Enhanced Text Analysis of Trading Legislation Through Verbalized Sampling

Congressional trading legislation presents a fundamental puzzle in political economy: when legislators design regulations governing their own financial behavior, do they create genuine constraints or symbolic gestures? This research develops and validates a novel computational framework integrating expert-weighted text analysis with Large Language Model (LLM)-based triangulation to systematically distinguish between substantive and symbolic regulation in self-regulatory legislation. The Congressional Bill Analysis Tool (CBAT) employs expert-validated keyword weighting across multiple regulatory dimensions to score bills on content quality, enforcement strength, implementation robustness, and loophole prevention. The framework's methodological significance lies in Verbalized Sampling (VS)—utilizing LLMs to generate multiple expert perspectives (securities law, public choice theory, congressional ethics, financial economics, constitutional law) that model interpretive diversity across analytical communities. The Interpretive Uncertainty Score (IUS) quantifies expert disagreement, while triangulated validity assessment compares automated classification with simulated expert consensus, enabling systematic detection of strategic ambiguity where bills combine strong procedural language with weak enforcement mechanisms.

Sawyer Rogers, University of Massachusetts Amherst

How State-Local Interest Groups Change the Rules of the Game: New Hampshire's SB2

Many approach “changing the rules of the game” within democracy and autocracy from the top-down at the global or national level (e.g. Bermeo, 2016; Diamond, 2024; Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2023; Lust and Waldner, 2015; Stokes, 2025). However, how can “the rules of the game” change from the bottom-up at a regional level? US states have seen a rise in federated national-state interest groups (Nownes and Newmark, 2024) lobbying to change state policies (Grumbach, 2022; Hertel-Ferandez, 2019). Yet there is little focus on how federated state-local interest groups (Skocpol et al, 2000) “change the rules of the game.” The small number of those who investigate state and local changes in the “rules of the game” across the globe focus on outcomes and process (Benton, 2021; Vetter, 2009), with only some substantially investigating how actors shaped the change (Mickey, 2015). This paper pairs the Institutional Analysis and Development framework’s collective action understanding of changing the rules of the game (Ostrom, 1990; 1995) with Haplin and Fraussens’ conceptualization of ways interest group influence policy via involvement, access, and prominence (2017). The paper seeks to understand how federated state and local interest groups “changed the rules of the game” in the US State of New Hampshire in the 1990s. It further speaks to deliberative and participatory democracy, power, and governance through the rule change resulting in less direct participatory power for citizens within deliberation in local New England Town Meetings. The paper specifically examines how advocacy organizations, professional associations, grassroots groups, and residents brought together through networks of social capital shaped state and local “rules of the game.” It draws on several years of committee records documenting various iterations of the policy with various materials including interest group letters and amendments, public comments, minutes, and handwritten legislator notes.

Natalie Rogol, Rhode Island College

Rogue Presidency: An American Story of Checks and Balances

As the powers of the president continue to increase, and as Congress passes less legislation, United States presidents have progressively adopted unilateral use of military force. In 2025, President Trump has claimed this unilateral authority to attack boats off the coast of Venezuela and send national guard troops into American cities. In response to these actions, the courts and Congress have been called on to check the president’s power. Previous work has examined the unitary executive and the dual presidency thesis. In this study, we seek to examine how the public reacts to potential pushback on the president’s use of unitary executive action in domestic and foreign spheres. We conduct a novel survey experiment to determine how the public views unitary uses of force and when the public will be more supportive of congressional and court intervention to stop the president from acting unchecked in domestic versus foreign affairs. We will present vignettes of situations both international and domestic where the president dictates the use of military force without congressional approval. We measure respondents’ approval of these actions and support for judicial and congressional interventions. Respondents provide demographic information including level of education, political knowledge, and ideology. This analysis will allow us to provide a comprehensive examination of how individuals perceive expanded executive power and its potential checks.

Gabriel Rojas-Salazar, University at Albany, SUNY

Electing Judges: Perspectives from the Judiciary in Mexico

In 2024, a new judicial reform was approved in Mexico, which requires that every judge in Mexico be chosen by popular election. About half of these judges were replaced by elections in June 2025, and the remaining judgeships are supposed to be filled by elections in 2027. Advocates of the reform claimed to want to democratize the judiciary through popular elections. However, a major judicial reform in 1994 started the process of professionalizing the judicial career through an exam-based civil service system, so this reform is a massive and abrupt shift away from a system that was beginning to consolidate. In this paper, we examine early effects of the judicial reform on the former and current staff and in the Mexican judiciary system overall, focusing on: first, what the judiciary staff think of the reform; second, how former judges and court staff respond and recover from losing their careers; third, how the expertise of the staff who have left is being replaced; lastly, how ideas about the judiciary are shared. Drawing on interviews and social network analysis with current and former judges, clerks, and other court staff, we show how the reform has reshaped their career trajectories, impacted the professional knowledge inside the judiciary, and changed perceptions of judicial legitimacy and efficiency.

David Rovinsky, United States Department of State

John Ibbitson and the Reordering of Canadian Political Space

John Ibbitson has been one of the most influential interpreters of Canadian politics over the past quarter-century, repeatedly advancing frameworks that have shaped how scholars, policymakers, and journalists understand regional power, demography, and national identity. This paper offers the first comprehensive political-historical assessment of Ibbitson's intellectual trajectory, from *Loyal No More* (2001) through *The Big Shift* (2013, with Darrell Bricker) and up to the forthcoming *Breaking Point* (2025). It argues that Ibbitson's work constitutes a coherent theory of political realignment centered on immigration, regional economic change, and the decline of the Laurentian Consensus—but also that his analysis has consistently underestimated the disruptive potential of populism, polarization, and U.S. democratic decay. The first section reconstructs the conceptual architecture of *The Big Shift* and places it in dialogue with earlier interpretations of Western alienation, the Calgary School, and demographic change. The second section draws on Ibbitson's more recent writing to show how he has revised (and in some areas reversed) key assumptions, especially regarding the stability of federal institutions, the resilience of multicultural consensus, and the political behavior of immigrant voters. The final section situates *Breaking Point* within the wider North American context, arguing that Ibbitson now recognizes forces—Trumpism, constitutional stress, disinformation, and economic insecurity—that his earlier frameworks treated as peripheral. By assembling these works into a single analytic genealogy, the paper clarifies both the durability and the limits of Ibbitson's approach. It also highlights why his evolving framework remains essential for understanding contemporary Canadian politics, even as the underlying demographic and geopolitical assumptions that grounded *The Big Shift* now appear far more contingent.

David Rovinsky, United States Department of State

Smallness, Dependence, and Flow: Rethinking Vermont

Vermont cultivates an image of deliberate smallness, rural autonomy, and policy distinctiveness. Yet across multiple domains—housing, taxation, labor markets, logistics, higher education, and transportation—the state functions less as a self-contained ecosystem and more as a dependent interface within larger regional systems. This paper develops a unified analytical framework for understanding Vermont as a borrowed-size economy whose viability depends on flows it does not control. The argument proceeds in three steps. First, it shows that Vermont’s regulatory choices (notably Act 250 and long-standing anti-growth sentiment) have produced structural housing shortages, constrained labor supply, and depressed in-state earning capacity, even as the state attracts residents whose income originates elsewhere. Second, it demonstrates that Vermont’s consumption economy—retail access, logistics, air travel, higher education, and specialized services—is sustained by external throughput from Boston, New York, and Montréal. These flows bring goods, income, and access into the state while exporting graduates, purchasing power, and tax revenue. Third, it argues that Vermont’s self-image as “small by choice” obscures the political consequences of this dependence: when external systems falter, Vermont experiences immediate disruption (as illustrated by recent aviation ground stops and retail shortages). The paper concludes that Vermont’s central political-economy problem is not isolation but permeability. Policy debates about housing reform, economic development, and demographic strategy cannot be understood without recognizing that Vermont imports the conditions for prosperity but exports the conditions for growth. This dependence on external flows suggests that Vermont’s long-term stability hinges not on preserving smallness, but on renegotiating its place within the regional networks that sustain it.

Genevieve Saharov, McGill University

Mythos for Medieval Martyrs: Politics of Martyrdom in The Consolation of Philosophy

In his book *Consolation of Philosophy*, Boethius presents a dialogue between a characterization of himself and a personified Philosophy during his imprisonment pending execution. The decision to align himself with the pagan victims of political despotism rather than the Apostles or victims of religious persecution would therefore reflect the desire to present the cases as two sides of the same issue. In his inquiry of what makes a tyrant, Boethius refers to examples of the Roman Empire to demonstrate this issue transcends his individual experiences and would fit into a pattern of victims of despotic rulers. As martyrdom necessitates the subjects place their duty to follow God’s truth above all that is dear to them in the material world, the adherence of early Christians to the laws of the State was contingent on the rules being conducive to their religious duties. While Roman institutions desired to promote themselves as pillars of reason in the court systems, the use of arbitrary and inexplicable power in spectacle demonstrates the sublime elements of violence that were often considered manifestations of the strength of the State. Despite many of Boethius’ contemporaries expressing sympathetic perspectives to his cause, dogmatic narratives of his martyrdom regarding his death as an expression of his faith were not popularized until the middle ages. As Medieval opinion of Theodoric’s rule became preoccupied with the kings Arianism and treatment of the Pope, the narrative of Boethius as a faithful believer rejecting the right of a despotic heretic to seize political control over the Catholic people was popularized. As Dante related his own exile to that of Boethius, echoes of the *Consolation* can be seen throughout the *Divine Comedy* through the presentation of allegorical and anagogical truths through the fictionalized narrative of the literal stories, as well as Dante’s commentary on power.

Deborah Schildkraut, Tufts University

Out-party animosity at the state and local level

Does partisan animosity vary across national, state, and local political contexts? Although prior research suggests that state and local politics are less polarized than national politics, we know less about whether affective polarization similarly varies across these levels in a federal system like the United States. Drawing on two studies (N = 2,703) combining experimental and observational evidence, we show that Americans express significantly lower out-party animus toward co-state and co-city partisans than toward national-level out-partisans. Notably, a subtle adjustment to question wording—prompting respondents to evaluate out-partisans “in your state”—reliably reduces reported animosity. These findings suggest that partisan hostility is not a fixed trait, but instead varies by political context. By demonstrating meaningful variation in affective polarization across levels of government, our results advance understanding of the nature of partisan animus and point to promising depolarization strategies: making politics more localized and less nationalized may reduce interparty hostility.

Elizabeth Sharrow, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Exclusion as Equity Policy?: Stakeholder Opinion and Transgender Athletes in Intercollegiate Athletics

Since 2020, twenty-seven U.S. states have passed laws banning the participation of transgender girls and women on school-sponsored athletic teams. During the 2026 U.S. Supreme Court session, two cases contesting the laws will be heard by the court. Although significant media attention has focused on perceived attitudes among the American public in support of trans exclusion, little is known about how the key stakeholders in college athletics have responded. This chapter from a book project draws on multiple original constituent (i.e., college athletes, college coaches, and athletic administrators) surveys and theories of group threat (e.g., Craig et al. 2018), tolerance (e.g., Sullivan and Transue 1999), and identity framing (e.g., Klar 2013) to argue that, in response to the politicization of trans inclusion in sports (i.e., increased salience of a distinctive marginalized groups), cisgender women within college sports became (1) more protective of a perceived exclusionary status quo, and (2) less likely to view trans inclusion as an equity issue. We were in the field both before politicization (i.e., 2018) and after (i.e., 2024) giving us unique leverage to explore the impacts over time of increased issue salience. Our findings reveal that politicization from the right resulted in less overall support for protections for trans athletes over time. These findings speak to both the nature of framing effects and the future of gender equality policy.

Adam Shepardson, University at Albany, SUNY

How Do Teacher Strikes Affect School Board Elections?

Strikes are inherently political. As with other forms of protest, strikers must capture public attention and gain public support, but disruptive actions they take to capture attention may provoke backlash. In this way, strikers experience a dilemma; the same actions that help them gain public attention risk driving away potential supporters. Prior research has established that teacher strikes are a form of protest that signals that an education system is in crisis— increasing attention to education issues in general election campaigns. But does this attention affect whether and how voters select their local political leaders who actually make relevant policy decisions? We examine whether and how teacher strikes impact local school board election turnout with an original dataset of school board elections and teacher strikes in North Carolina and Washington State (2013-2022). We use a synthetic differences-in-differences approach that compares pre/post trends in school districts who experienced a teacher strike to those from synthetic controls built from never-striking units. This strategy produces event study-style estimates of turnout effects each election cycle following a strike. We find that teacher strikes cause school board election voter turnout to decrease by 1-2 pp (percentage points). Effects are larger among voters aged 36-60 who are most likely to have children in school and smallest for Republican voters. Effects are notably larger in off-cycle elections, depressing the already low, off-cycle turnout by about 7.5 pp on average. Our research stands to make two important contributions. (1) We use and provide a novel dataset of school board election turnout overall and for several subgroups, and (2) we demonstrate that teacher strikes demobilize voters in the subsequent school board election—with some voters experiencing a lasting demobilization effect. More broadly, this suggests that locally oriented protests reduce political engagement in relevant elections.

Hadass Silver, Holy Family University

A Ventriloquist Act: Against Epistemic Deference

Deferring to the authority of people from marginalized groups when discussing politics and morality has become a widespread practice among many self-identified progressives today. While the intellectual genealogy of this practice can be traced back to progressive traditions, I argue that epistemic deference preserves the power of the speaker rather than amplifies others' speech. More precisely, I argue that epistemic deference is not deference at all but an act of ventriloquism, wherein a speaker selects members of an ascriptive group to represent and give moral authority to her own view. To make this argument, I examine two traditions—first, a subset of Marxism and second, feminist standpoint theory—that identify a priori which groups have access to revolutionary insights (the proletariat and women, respectively). In evaluating and comparing these traditions, I contend that authors who aim to theoretically deduce the vanguard of a movement insulate their position against critique by claiming to represent the viewpoint of those with inherent epistemic authority. In speaking for the proletariat, women, or other repressed groups, such authors—who may or may not belong to said group—dismiss members of the (supposedly) epistemically privileged group who oppose them as victims of false consciousness.

Indira Sinha, College of Commerce

AI-Driven Transformations in Voting Behaviour: Micro-Targeting, Emotional Governance, and the Future of Electoral Politics

Artificial Intelligence is reshaping the foundations of electoral politics by transforming how voting behaviour is produced, predicted, and influenced. As predictive analytics, behavioural micro-targeting, and computational models of emotional engagement become embedded in campaign infrastructures, the voter is increasingly rendered as a continuously quantifiable data subject rather than a purely civic actor. This shift signals the emergence of a new epistemic regime in which political preferences are constructed, interpreted, and operationalised through algorithmic systems. This paper examines three interconnected dynamics driving this transformation. First, the proliferation of AI enabled predictive analytics has reconfigured the ontology of the voter, enabling granular behavioural modelling that draws from psychology, digital humanities, and cognitive science to forecast political actions with unprecedented precision. Second, large scale micro-targeting techniques reshape voter choice by embedding individuals within computational rationalities that structure attention, deliberation, and emotional susceptibility. These systems integrate neuro-cognitive bonding cues, affective data, and personalised messaging to influence decision-making processes in ways that are often opaque to the public. Third, algorithmic emotionality encoded through dynamic feedback loops, behavioural nudges, and sentiment driven mobilisation strategies reshapes how political actors engage supporters and construct collective action. By mapping these dynamics, the paper argues that AI has generated a profound transformation in democratic practice: elections no longer hinge solely on persuasion or ideological alignment, but increasingly on technologically mediated emotional governance. Understanding these shifts is essential for evaluating the future of democratic legitimacy, electoral accountability, and the ethical boundaries of computational politics.

Nathan Smolucha, Harvard Extension School

Framing Strategies in Pakhtunistan: Exploring the Role of Pakhtunwali in Defining Ideological, Social and Political Interactions

The Pakhtuns are a large tribal community whose territory overlaps the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Both states have attempted to politicize the Pakhtun community through framing their national identity with ethno-national and pan-Islamic narratives. A key feature of these narrative strategies is their attempted alignment with a Pakhtun ideology called the Pakhtunwali. This thesis explores what social effect such narratives have had on Pakhtunwali and related Pakhtun tribal institutions as a result. Implications for regime stability in Afghanistan are assessed using visual models that identify points of congruence between social narratives and their Pakhtun audience. The theoretical foundations established by “framing” in social movement theory literature is relied upon for this study of strategic narratives. These narrative-based framing interactions are considered in the larger context of English School theory's international and regional “world” societies. Both primary and secondary academic sources were consulted for the case study in the absence of field research. This thesis contributes to the academic field by suggesting potential methods of visualizing ideological competition, as well as encouraging deeper consideration of how common perception of the Pakhtuns have changed as a result.

Daniel Solon, Lincoln Memorial University

Ancestry, Culture & Political Outcomes in the United States

I examine how changes in ancestral cultural traits such as individualism, obedience, and trust affected political outcomes using population ancestry data and voting patterns for every U.S. county from 1890 to 2018 for House of Representatives elections. Results indicate that ancestral individualism, trust, and obedience all have highly significant relationships with Republican vote share. A one percentage point increase in a county's individualism and trust score leads to between a 0.5 and 1.4 percentage point increase in Republican vote share. These results are robust to controls for race, economic occupations, year and state fixed effects, and an instrumental variable model using a shift-in-share instrument. The significance of these traits varies across decades. Examining interaction effects between cultural traits and changes in county diversity and economic growth, I show that cultural traits become more important in explaining voting patterns during periods of rising diversity and falling economic growth. There is also a strong correlation between the size of cultural coefficients and congressional polarization, suggesting that when parties diverge more ideologically, culture becomes more important for electoral outcomes and may influence actual policy. To test this, I aggregate ancestral data to the congressional district level for 1900–2010 and examine how they relate to representatives' voting records. Using DW-NOMINATE data on economic ideology, I show that changes in cultural traits significantly affect politicians' economic voting records. Politicians representing districts that are becoming more trusting and individualistic vote for more economically conservative programs (less redistribution, lower taxes, less spending). Congressional districts moving from the 25th to 75th percentile in individualism, trust, and obedience scores see a 25% increase in their representative's economic conservatism. This result holds when controlling for political parties, meaning cultural traits explain voting patterns within parties, with effect sizes larger than district income and education levels

Ashley Soto, University of Connecticut

More than Mask: How South Korea Leverages Private Industry to Cultivate Global power through Beauty and Culture

In the modern world, soft power is a critical resource for how states achieve foreign policy goals, relying on cultural attraction rather than military or hard coercive force. However, much of the existing scholarship concentrates on defining and measuring soft power, with comparatively less examination on the specific strategies states employ to cultivate it. Most studies emphasize state-led initiatives and overlook how states work through private actors. This study addresses that gap by analyzing the range of business-state relationships through which governments develop soft power spanning large corporations to individual entrepreneurs and the principal agent dynamics that influence their effectiveness over time. The success of specific cultural industries provides a particularly useful lens for observing these mechanisms in practice. Through a mix methods approach with process-tracing and content analysis, this study identifies three ways in which South Korea has strategically leveraged its private skincare and beauty industry to cultivate and project influence in the United States: (1) venture fund partnerships, (2) engagement of social media influencers, and (3) promotion through cultural centers. The findings expand our understanding of the sources of soft power and the role of private industries in statecraft and offer insights into the future of U.S.-Korean relations.

Shyam Sriram, Canisius University

“White Light/ White Heat: South African Immigrants Assess the Arrival of Afrikaner Refugees”

Less than a week after his inauguration, President Donald Trump announced that the United States Refugee Admission Program (USRAP) would be suspended indefinitely. While the executive order was met with a range of emotions, there was cautious optimism that refugee resettlement would resume within 90 days as had occurred in 2017 during the first Trump administration. The January 20th 2025 executive order mentioned 90 days too, but almost a year later, resettlement remains paralyzed. Within one month, however, the president made a dizzying about-face, ordering the United States to accept refugees ... from the Republic of South Africa. However, these would only be white Afrikaner refugees “escaping government-sponsored race-based discrimination, including racially discriminatory property confiscation” (White House 2025). While the 1980 Refugee Act established the refugee ceiling – minimum number of refugees the US would accept and resettle – as 50,000 per annum, Trump was the first US president to lower the refugee ceiling (Sriram 2019). In October 2025, his administration announced that the refugee ceiling for 2025 would be 7,500, most of whom would be white Afrikaners. The odd policy generates a fascinating question – what do South Africans in the United States think about this Afrikaner refugee policy? This conference paper presents preliminary findings from approximately twenty interviews with South Africans living in the United States including naturalized citizens and documented immigrants. Using a national snowball sample, I interviewed a diverse sample of South Africans across the country over the phone and Zoom to gauge their perspectives.

Shyam Sriram, Canisius University

“ICE Removals and the Stability of Fascism: Lessons from Agamben, Deleuze, and Guattari”

One of the most profound political works of the twentieth century is Italian theorist Giorgio Agamben’s *Homo Sacer* (1998). The “sacred man” was a person in Roman law who had committed a crime that rendered him obsolete and capable of being killed because he had no rights. Agamben contrasted this with the figure of the sovereign who maintained the law. The implications of Agamben’s work have been immense, particularly in his application of *homo sacer* to Hannah Arendt’s (1951) understanding of totalitarianism, Nazis, and the Holocaust. We bring Agamben into 2026 by applying his understanding of the sacred man to the undocumented immigrant in the United States whose body/identity/dignity is at the mercy of the current administration. Undocumented immigrants are diminished by the state as a negative sacrifice, one that is necessary to maintain the nature of the sovereign itself. Despite the seemingly daily violations of human rights documented in the United States, there also seems to be at least one segment of Americans who endorse the violence of ICE agents. We see this as an extension of the work of French theorists Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari who asserted in *Anti-Oedipus* (1972) that people essentially yearn for fascism. Behind the veiled mask of democracy, the public wants security and would rather sacrifice certain freedoms. This allows the average man (whom we call *homo mediocris*) to convince himself that fascism is best to maintain social order by relying on the might of the state. This *homo mediocris* believes his exceptionalism within the state is gained from the vacuum left by the removal of the *homo sacer*. By combining Agamben, Deleuze and Guattari, this paper establishes a new benchmark theory on fascist social movements particularly in the United States, and the current mass movement to humiliate, remove, and denaturalize immigrants.

Patricia Strach, University at Albany, SUNY

How Experience Shapes Expectations of Government: Lessons from the Opioid Epidemic

The first two decades of the twenty-first century saw a rapid rise in opioid overdose deaths, often described as affecting a new and different population: young, white, suburban and rural individuals. Yet addiction is not new for young people, white Americans, or individuals in suburban and rural areas, even if the prevalence of the substance used varies (Friesen et al 2022; Gfroerer et al 2007; KFF 2023). So why was the opioid epidemic seen as something affecting a new and different population? And what can this tell us about how people experience addiction (in particular) and government (more generally)? Drawing on interviews with 192 individuals, focus groups with 80 people, and participant observation at 22 sites, I use the opioid epidemic to capture how people experience government in very different ways based on status. Status structures how people believe government will treat them and reflects the position they occupy within the social hierarchy of visibility and worthiness.

Kathleen Sullivan, Ohio University

Losing through Winning: Maritime Capital and Labor in WWI

In 1915, maritime labor interests won a major victory with passage of the U.S. Seamen’s Act, which met seamen’s demands for improved working conditions and abolition of criminal punishment for desertion. This law was passed on the heels of 1913’s reorganization of the Department of Labor and Department of Commerce, the former providing representation to maritime labor, the latter to maritime capital/shipowners. Wartime imperatives operated on this terrain, in which maritime functions were separated into two distinct departments. During the war, the federal government relied upon American shipowners to provide for shipbuilding, leaving seamen out of the effort. By war’s end, shipowners resumed control of maritime labor. This paper examines the institutional reorganization that looked like a victory for maritime labor but became a setback.

Dakota Svec, Simmons University

Everything is a Story: How The Formation of Social Issues Reflects the Need to Understand All Public Policy Through Narrative Structure

The Narrative Policy Framework analyzes public policy as being shaped by both individual and societal narratives. This piece dissects the assertion that all public policy is inherently narrative because human life is inherently narrative. The development of any policy can be understood as actors in certain social or political climates experience conflict, resulting in the development and implementation of public policy. This paper assesses how, even through the applications of several established policy frameworks – including the Stages Framework, Punctuated Equilibrium Theory, Advocacy Coalition Framework, Multiple Streams Theory, and the Garbage Can Model – any theory of policymaking, even those that are nonlinear, can be understood through narrative structure.

Lucas Swaine, Dartmouth College

Spirit for Liberal Democracy

Spirit receives little attention in current political theory, despite the significance of spirit in the history of political thought and notwithstanding the reliance on spirit in prominent theories of liberal democracy. This paper brings spirit into focus, distinguishing a particular kind of spirit that I call spirit as a motivational mindset. This understanding of spirit is conceptually distinctive and analytically important. It complements scholarship in social psychology and deliberative theory, and it clarifies arguments about spirit’s nature and its political value. The idea of spirit as a motivational mindset illuminates the phenomenon of inspiration. Spirit has prospects for animating and enlivening democratic publics, even for repairing political fissures, despite associated dangers of adverse or excessive enthusiasm.

Nicholas Tampio, Fordham University

The Health of Democracy: Why Democratic Theorists Need to Discuss Public Health Nutrition

The Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) movement has helped link the topic of dietary reform with right-wing politics. In this article, I argue that democratic political theorists need to participate in debates about public health rather than leave the field to conservatives. The article begins by showing that deliberative democracy proffers a “talk-centric” view of democracy (Chambers 2023) that can, on principle, refuse to enter debates about the manipulation of the viscera (Marwah 2017). Then, I argue that deliberative democratic proposals to regulate the Internet (Habermas 2024; Bächtiger and Dryzek 2024; Forestal 2022) address important problems but are insufficient to change democratic habits. Next, I contend that obesity-associated diseases poses a threat to democracy, including affecting citizens’ lifespans, mental health, social functioning, and energy levels (Balasundaram and Daley 2025). Then, I address objections about placing the onus for public health on the neoliberal subject (Warin 2023) and fat-shaming (Stanley and Hicks 2023). The article ends by discussing how the American pragmatist Jane Addams addressed the problem of poor health by promoting children playing sports (Tarver and Sullivan 2023) and serving healthy meals at Hull House (Robbins and Tippen 2018). In sum, the article argues that democratic political theorists ought to participate in debates about public health, including policies to support a healthy citizenry.

Samantha Taylor, Johns Hopkins University

Post Cold War American Liberal Internationalism and US Policy Decision-Making

American Liberal Internationalism is a variation of Liberal Internationalism, defined by the addition of American exceptionalism and American international leadership. This concept was founded by Woodrow Wilson and evolved into American Liberal Internationalism by the 1990s. After the Cold War, U.S. policy responses and leadership of the international environment allowed the to establish the liberal world order that is currently undergoing changes. By examining the evolution of American Liberal Internationalism and the international environment it is possible to understand how the United States founded the post-Cold War liberal order.

Kirin Taylor, Syracuse University

Blueprints from Abroad: International Law in Domestic Housing Rights Movements

Under what circumstances does social movements' engagement with international law and standards around the right to housing (R2H) lead to legal change at the national level? My dissertation investigates how and when the norm of housing as a human right and its legal aspects gain domestic traction through civil society advocacy and strategy, in forms such as rights translation to local frames, leveraging international law to pressure domestic actors and institutions, and legitimating the goals of the movement through international law as a normative resource. Despite international affirmation of housing as a socio-economic right, domestic uptake is uneven. This study addresses a significant gap in political science and international law scholarship by focusing on how international norms inform movement strategy and outcomes in housing rights advocacy, including legal mobilization. The theory-building project uses a sequential case study design. In the first stage, an in-depth study of Canada is used to generate hypotheses centered on how housing rights movements engage international legal norms, and through what mechanisms such engagement contributes to national legal change. In the second stage, comparative case studies of Mexico and the United States of America probe this theory's scope conditions, specifying when engagement is less likely to reshape domestic legal frameworks around the right to housing. Data will include original semi-structured interviews and archival materials, which will be evaluated with the analytical method of process tracing. The project makes a contribution to three strands of literature, including social movements and legal mobilization, compliance with international law, and non-state actors in international law. For NEPSA's 2026 conference, I will present a preliminary draft of the theory chapter, with the beginnings of a case study on Canada.

Owen Temby, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Examining the Relationship Between Civic Agriculture Participation and Civic Engagement in South Texas

Civic agriculture is often credited with strengthening democratic life by encouraging civic and political engagement, yet this claim has scarcely been tested in socioeconomically marginalized regions. This study assesses that relationship in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas, a majority-Hispanic agricultural region marked by high poverty and low civic participation, using original survey data collected through a combination of random and purposive sampling. Phone and online surveys were administered in English and Spanish to reach both the general population and individuals involved in civic agriculture initiatives, yielding over 500 responses. We examine whether civic agriculture participation predicts greater community involvement, political activity, and perceived community cohesion after controlling for demographic and ideological factors. Hierarchical regression models show that civic agriculture participation is significantly associated with community involvement and political activity, but not with perceptions of community cohesion. These results suggest that while civic agriculture may not transform deeper perceptions of cohesion, it can broaden organizational and political engagement—even in regions facing structural barriers to participation. The findings offer cautious support for civic agriculture's democratic potential beyond affluent or well-studied contexts.

Priscilla Torres, Wellesley College

The Gatekeepers of Peace: How Community Characteristics Influence International Peacebuilding

Under what conditions do international peacebuilding and local communities complement or undermine one another in their efforts to bring about local peace? Does international peacebuilding work after international peacebuilders leave? Once war ends and peacebuilding begins, not only do international peacebuilders deploy, but local communities also rebuild and adapt to the new political moment. Their informal institutions (traditional leaders, informal community leaders, local dispute resolution practices, etc.) operate alongside international peacebuilders and the state. These communities may resist, cooperate, enhance, or remain indifferent to the efforts of international peacebuilders. Community institutional arrangements condition the extent to which international peacebuilding is effective at establishing long term, local peace. I argue that local informal community institutions often condition the extent to which international peacebuilding is effective in the long term. Using household survey data, community leadership data and interviews with informal community leaders from post-conflict Liberia I further develop this argument and test its observable implications.

Jim Twombly, Elmira College

Polarization and Presidential Power: An Explanation for the Increase in Use of Unilateral Power via Executive Orders

As with most things when studying the presidency, especially the modern presidency, it is Franklin Roosevelt who sets the bar. In response to the great national emergency of the Great Depression, Roosevelt did not wait for Congress to act, but instead put forward new policies and programs to bring the spiraling economic conditions under control. He used Executive Orders to begin making changes, 533 in just his first year (1933) alone. Over the course of American history, presidents have tended to be more modest in their use of unilateral power. It would appear, however, that more recent presidents, in an environment of high partisan polarization, a global pandemic, and seemingly constant wars are more willing to embrace this expansion of the institution's power. Donald Trump signed 212 orders in the first 10 months of his second term; so Biden's 77 signed orders seems meager by comparison. Carmines and Fowler (2017) have noted that perhaps more recent presidents have felt compelled to employ unilateral powers due to polarization-induced legislative stalemate. They note that this, coupled with frequent military engagements, has led to a shift in the political balance of power away from Congress to the president (see also Beschloss 2018). Other scholars have noted not only the influence of polarization, but also of divided government on the increased reliance by presidents on the assertion of unilateral power (Cameron 2002, Bolton and Thrower 2016, Kelley and Marshall 2008, and Grove 2020). Using measures like Gallup's Party Difference score, presidential margins in Congress, and others, this paper seeks to explain the relationship, if any, between a president's use of Executive Orders and polarization.

Jesse Usher Barrett, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Encounters With Law Enforcement: Utilizing Review Text as a Measurement of Police Contact

Using a collection of novel review data from Yelp, we analyze rhetoric of reviews describing encounters with law enforcement organizations. These data offer a rich, naturalistic source for understanding the characteristics about public interactions with police - which are not normally accessible through traditional survey measures. Specifically, we analyze metrics related to sense of justice and fairness towards local law enforcement, across time, geographic locations, and other engagement outcomes on the Yelp platform. This project offers unique leverage for capturing candid, unprompted recollections of individuals' interactions with the state, on a platform where these accounts do not inherently belong.

Jesse Usher Barrett, University of Massachusetts Amherst

When the Court Speaks Up: Rhetorical Shifts in the Chief Justice's Year-End Reports, 1992-2024"

How has the language of the Chief Justice's Year-End Report changed over time? We argue that the Chief's language has become more defensive in tone to counter calls for reforming the Court as approval for the Supreme Court has decreased in recent years. Chief Justices have historically used the Year-End Report as an agenda-setting tool but as political attacks on the Court have increased we posit that the Chief is using this opportunity to defend his fellow colleagues on the courts. We demonstrate this by examining Chief Justice's Year-End Report from 1992-2024, across two Chief Justices William Rehnquist and John Roberts, and by comparing these changes to trends in national public opinion data on the Supreme Court. We expect to find that more recent reports contain a higher percentage of negative words. Further, the drop-in approval for the Court is affecting this change in the language used by the Chief.

Antoaneta Vanc, Quinnipiac University

The politics of portrayal: New York Times narratives of Eastern European countries during the Ukraine war

Media portrayals of countries play a powerful role in shaping their international images. Country image also depends on a country's response to major geopolitical events and can affect its broader reputation and perception internationally. Trigger events, such as periods of conflict, may propel certain foreign countries into the U.S. media spotlight and alter the way they are portrayed. This study examines how national images of Eastern European countries are constructed in The New York Times through coverage of the Ukraine war. Focusing on five countries including, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia, this paper investigates the New York Times' narratives to portray each country in the context of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The findings are based on inductive and deductive analysis of all articles published in the New York Times since the beginning of war, February 24, 2022. Using NVivo, the study employs an inductive analysis to identify emerging country-specific images that could offer a comparative map of how the New York Times constructs distinctive national images for these seven countries. In addition, a deductive coding frame examines specific issue areas central to contemporary European security such as, NATO defense and alliance unity, military assistance to Ukraine, each country's humanitarian or refugee response. This study contributes to scholarship related to the role of news narratives in international relations and diplomacy. It highlights the role of influential news media in constructing external narratives about countries during war and emphasizes how these portrayals may influence international perceptions, diplomatic expectations, and the symbolic positioning of countries within the broader European security.

Santiago Virgüez Ruiz, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Navigating Confounderland: Discovering Latent Variables on Legal Texts for Causal Inference

This paper introduces a new methodological approach for discovering the causal effects of text-based features on judicial behavior. Socio-legal research often relies on deductive reasoning, where researchers identify variables of interest beforehand, potentially overlooking critical text-driven causal relationships. Building on recent advancements in causal theory, this study utilizes the inductive methodology developed by Fong and Grimmer to uncover latent features within legal texts that may influence judicial outcomes. To achieve this, I focus on the impact of amicus briefs in the U.S. Supreme Court. Specifically, I investigate which aspects of these briefs are associated with their influence. By identifying hidden features within the texts of the briefs, the study aims to uncover potential factors for causal inference, such as treatments or confounders. Preliminary findings suggest that language associated with Intentionalist interpretation and legislative authority increases the likelihood of influence, while using criminal justice language may also have a positive impact when other variables are considered. This approach not only challenges traditional methodologies in legal text analysis but also enhances our understanding of how unexamined text characteristics can affect judicial behavior and case outcomes. By integrating inductive and deductive reasoning, the proposed methodology provides a more robust framework for causal inference, with potential applications in law and related fields that involve complex text analysis.

Simon Vodrey, Carleton University

Pipelines, Political Polarization, Wedge Politics, & Anger as a Motivating Factor in Canadian Politics

In an era increasingly characterized by the high cost of living, economic uncertainty, and trade disputes, politics seems to be more divisive and more visceral than in the not-so-distant past of merely a few election cycles ago. With an eye towards examining the intersection between political polarization, wedge politics, and anger as a motivating factor in politics, this paper examines one particularly visceral wedge issue that continues to serve as a point of intersection between political polarization, wedge issues, and anger to mobilize voters: oil and natural gas pipeline expansion and its relationship to Canadian national unity. More specifically, this hot button — and increasingly important — issue is examined in the Canadian context by assessing the perception of the politically turbulent struggle between a consensus on the role of oil and natural gas pipeline expansion in twenty-first century Canada. To conduct a case study of this topic and to explore how it enables the three interlinked forces of political polarization, wedge politics, and anger as a motivating factor in politics, I use elite in-depth interviews with Canadian commercial marketers, political marketers, political strategists, political consultants, lobbyists, and political staffers to investigate how and why oil and natural gas pipeline expansion continues to represent a key wedge issue in Canadian politics.

Aaron Weinstein, Fairfield University

Catholicism, Democracy, and Civil Religion

Americans' faith in constitutional democracy and the rule of law are frighteningly low. What is needed, many argue, is a revitalized "American Civil Religion" (ACR). Yet current polarization and declining institutional trust make an uncivil religion—one premised on disunity, rather than cohesion—more likely. But is polarization, itself, the issue? I would suggest ACR's theoretical difficulties are rooted in the unique historical circumstances during which ACR was first articulated. This paper focuses upon one such tension: Robert N. Bellah's decision to highlight John F. Kennedy, which led him to underscore the president's Catholicism as exemplary of ACR as a "lowest common denominator faith." Yet the Catholic Church's stances toward liberal democracy are far from constant, ranging from denigration (e.g., Pope Leo XIII's *Libertas* condemning political liberalism) to praise (e.g., Vatican II's *Dignitatis humanae*), and including tensions between the American Church and the Global Church in Rome. This analysis contextualizes how the resurgence of integralism within American Catholicism is neither unprecedented, nor is it immaterial for understanding present difficulties in American Civil Religion.

Liza B. Williams, Tufts University

Hospitality as a Movement and Practice in the Age of Global Populism

This article places inclusionist and exclusionist logics pertaining to migration within an era of global populism, showing that hospitality is needed to disrupt border violence and cruelty toward migrants and noncitizens that can erupt from policies and practices aimed at border securitization. As a first-order political matter, the article makes the case that an ethos of hospitality is the most promising panacea for populism's dehumanization of noncitizens. The paper additionally explains why hospitality is also needed to insulate systems (especially markets under advanced stages of technocratic capitalism) against the upheaval that would accord completely opening borders in respect to persons.

Gregory Williams, Simmons University

Moral Beliefs of a Declining Hegemonic Power

How do the moral views of hegemonic states change as their power declines? This work shows how the United States changed its tone following its hegemonic phase in the generation after World War II. In those days, America promoted developmentalism, an ideology that advised the world's new nation-states to maintain close economic and diplomatic connections with their former colonizers. In the developmentalist view, problems of debt and political instability were due to the moral failings of the new state (and not the legacy of colonialism). Washington had the moral authority to offer advice, it thought, because of its standing on the world stage. In fact, President Eisenhower was the first to utter that line which became popular among his successors: "America is great because America is good." Over time, however, this sentiment moved from the world stage to America itself. As U.S. international hegemony declined in the late twentieth century, America's domestic hegemonic class took up the language of developmentalism at home. Business leaders and public officials adopted the idea of meritocracy, reframing personal success in terms of one's own efforts. Problems of debt and unemployment were not social issues in need of our collective attention, but merely ways that society holds people accountable for their failings. In a strange capsizal, Washington's twenty-first century moral teachings at home now align with its pronouncements abroad.

Madison Witaconis, Simmons University

Writing on the Wall: The Political & Linguistic Dimensions of Boston Graffiti

For centuries, humans have used public spaces as canvases to express culture, identity, and resistance. This historical practice of inscribing messages on public surfaces continues today, though its meaning and legitimacy remain highly contested. In contemporary politics, graffiti exists at the intersection of regulation and resistance; it challenges who has the authority to define public space and whose voices are deemed legitimate in the urban landscape. Political and legal frameworks such as city ordinances, property laws, and policing practices shape which forms of visual expression are sanctioned or criminalized, while cultural values determine whether graffiti is seen as creative art or social disorder. This research argues that graffiti operates as a powerful language of urban storytelling that demonstrates both community identity and visibility politics in the city. Through ethnographic visits, comparative analysis, secondary literature review, and photographic documentation of graffiti across several Boston neighborhoods, this study emphasizes graffiti's paramount role in highlighting underserved communities and documenting collective memory. Beyond Boston, this analysis contributes to scholarship in urban studies, language and politics, and cultural sociology—creating an interdisciplinary framework for understanding the politics of visual expression. Ultimately, this research highlights how acts of inscription, whether celebrated or condemned, reveal deeper struggles over the meaning of contemporary urban life.

Alexis Worthen, Simmons University

Girlbossing Too Close To The Sun: Rand, Friedman, and the Feminist Critique of the Market Individual

This paper analyzes how neoliberal discourse repackages the moral subject of capitalism by translating the market's idealized independent individual into contemporary gendered archetypes such as the "girlboss" and the "tradwife". Drawing on Ayn Rand's "Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal" and Milton and Rose Friedman's "Free to Choose", this analysis identifies a shared premise for capitalists: that freedom is equated with the ability to be self-sufficient, and moral worth derives from participation in voluntary market exchange. Yet, as feminist theorists Shulamith Firestone, Zillah Eisenstein, and Angela Davis demonstrate, the self-made figure is sustained by hidden forms of dependence, particularly unpaid and feminized reproductive labor. Through close readings of both classical and socialist feminist critiques, the paper argues that neoliberal feminism does not take issue with capitalist freedom and structural dependence, but rather relies on it. The "girlboss" valorizes hyper-individualist ambition, while the "tradwife" frames submission as empowered choice, but each reproduces the same patriarchal and capitalist logics of hierarchy. Together, these figures illustrate how neoliberalism absorbs feminist language into a market grammar of choice, transforming the rhetoric of liberation into a mechanism of consent.

Wendy Wright, William Paterson University

Solidarity and Care: Twinned Principles in Angela Y. Davis's Activist Philosophy

The expansion of mass protest in recent years, including with claims that the October 2025 No Kings Protest was the largest single-day protest in US history, alongside increased interest in mutual aid projects, solidarity as a way of being in relation with individuals and groups is receiving renewed attention. This paper argues for a particular conception of abolitionist solidarity grounded in Angela Davis's theories of politics. Specifically, the paper argues that Davis, across her activist and scholarly work, builds a model of solidarity that is grounded in care, and demands careful attention to the work of power in relations as a means of determining that which is owed to one another. The paper concludes with reflections on how this model of care might be mobilized in contemporary liberation movements.

Qiaomo Wu, University of Hong Kong

External Infrastructure Finance and Elections in Post-Liberation States

This paper explores the mixed effects of externally financed infrastructure projects, particularly those funded by Chinese loans, on elections in post-liberation Sub-Saharan African regions. While traditional political theories suggest that visible infrastructure investment should benefit incumbents by signaling competence and facilitating credit-claiming, there is evidence of subnational variation in electoral outcomes. In some areas, external infrastructure funds (EIF) bolster incumbent vote share, while in others, they generate backlash. This variation is influenced by liberation-nationalist ideologies, with opposition parties in areas where anti-imperial or liberation narratives are strong framing EIF as threats to sovereignty and exacerbating perceptions of neo-colonial dependency. In contrast, in regions with weaker ideological legacies, performance signals predominate, leading to greater electoral support for incumbents. Focusing on Namibia, this study examines subnational variations in project placement, timing, and the legacy of political ideologies. By using ideology as a lens, the paper aims to explain why Chinese-funded EIF produces divergent electoral effects in post-liberation states. This research contributes to international political economy by shedding light on how external investors shape domestic political legitimacy and to comparative politics by refining theories of political signaling and clientelism.

Qiaomo Wu, University of Hong Kong

Regime Types and Economic Recovery Strategies: A Comparative Analysis of Democratic and Authoritarian Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic

This paper examines how regime types influence economic recovery in the post-COVID-19 era. By comparing democratic and authoritarian regimes, we explore which mechanisms explain how regime type influences economic output. Using a mixed-methods approach, we identify a nonlinear, U-shaped relationship between democracy and economic performance: both highly democratic and highly authoritarian regimes achieve higher growth, but through distinct pathways. Initial democratization may hinder growth at low levels of democracy, but beyond a threshold, further democratization fosters economic expansion. We test three hypotheses: (1) market freedom, (2) policy change suddenness, and (3) investment variance. Results show that economic freedom positively correlates with GDP, supporting neoliberal claims, while policy uncertainty follows a quadratic relationship with democracy, with a minimum at moderate levels. Case studies of the U.S., Vietnam, the U.K., and Japan reveal that democratic regimes prioritize transparency and accountability, albeit more slowly, while authoritarian regimes favor rapid, centralized interventions. Our findings support that democratic systems build long-term resilience, while authoritarian regimes achieve quick but less sustainable results. Strengthening supervision institutions is crucial for effective crisis management and sustained growth.

Qiaomo Wu, University of Hong Kong

The Paradox of Pragmatism: Chinese Investment and Its Impact on African Governance

This paper examines the impact of Chinese aid on African governance, focusing on the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). It explores whether Chinese finance reinforces authoritarian regimes, contrasting China's "non-interference" policy with Western donors' stances in promoting democracy. The study uses both quantitative data on GDP, democracy scores, and investment flows to assess the relationship between Chinese aid and regime type. Qualitative case studies are also used to verify the hypothesis. It finds that, though Chinese investments are driven primarily by economic potential rather than political factors, they may unintentionally lead to democratic backsliding. The paper mentions four mechanisms: self-reinforcing allocation, project leverage, patronage networks, and dependency institutionalization, which can strengthen autocratic power and hinder democratic reforms. China's aid supports infrastructure development, but it often neglects transparency and accountability, thus reinforcing authoritarianism. This paradox challenges the recipient state's sustainable development and democratic resilience.

Seungjoon Yoo, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Political Learning and Participation across Immigrant Generations: Evidence from Asian Americans

This study examines how political learning shapes participation across immigrant generations, focusing on variation in both the sources and types of learning. While prior research has emphasized the mobilizing effects of political learning, I argue that its effects depend on where learning occurs and the type of political knowledge acquired. Distinguishing between civic and institutional political knowledge, I analyze learning across family, peer, religious, and school contexts. Using survey data on Asian Americans, I further assess how these learning environments relate to political participation and whether their effects vary across immigrant generations. The results suggest that social networks play an important role in shaping political learning and participation among immigrants, while the role of family socialization varies across generations.

Hisham Yousif, United States Military Academy

The Narrowing of America's Epistemic Frontier

This paper examines the contemporary assault on liberalism in the United States, specifically the loss of institutional trust, and its likely effect on Civil-Military Relations. The central cause of eroding trust, I will argue, is a narrowing of the American intellectual horizon since 1990. The political philosophy of American elites was too narrow to effectively face the challenges it would encounter for the next 35 years. The Lockean framework of protection of rights and limited government with separated institutions sharing power was too narrow to account for America's political and economic success. What this narrow view neglects is that security concerns are paramount to liberal success – security concerns, I will argue, Americans were largely insulated from for much of their history. This narrow and narrowing of Americans' political theory led leaders, institutions, and civil society to respond narrowly to domestic and international challenges, especially the events of September 11th. The resulting failures of the War on Terror produced disillusionment with institutions exacerbating cultural and economic insecurity. These insecurities are placing a strain on the US political system as the public becomes more tolerant of violations of democratic norms allay cultural and economic fears. Democratic institutions experiencing an erasure of norms and low approval ratings threaten civil-military relations acutely since the military is inordinately laden with norms to maintain its separation and function within the liberal framework. I will argue that the military, enjoying high rates of public trust, will experience politicization in the future as politicians exploit their popularity to garner public support, further deteriorating norms. I will conclude by examining ways to widen the narrowed Lockean lens, restore public trust, and stem the erosion of civil-military norms central to the preservation of the American democratic practice.

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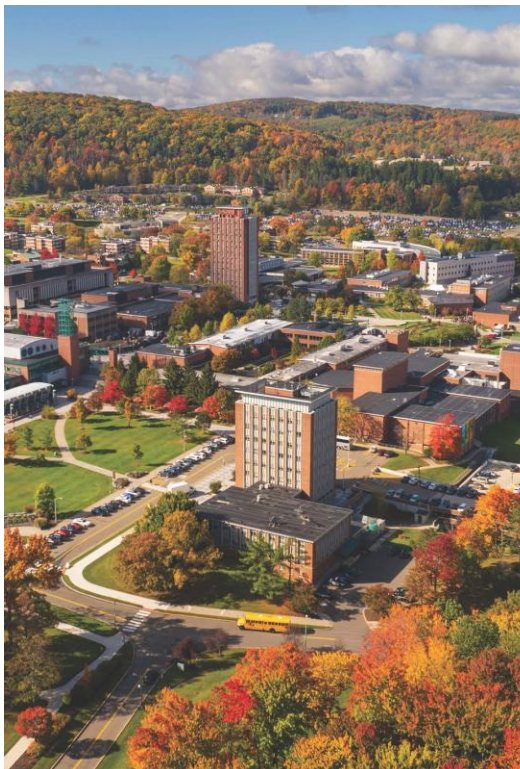
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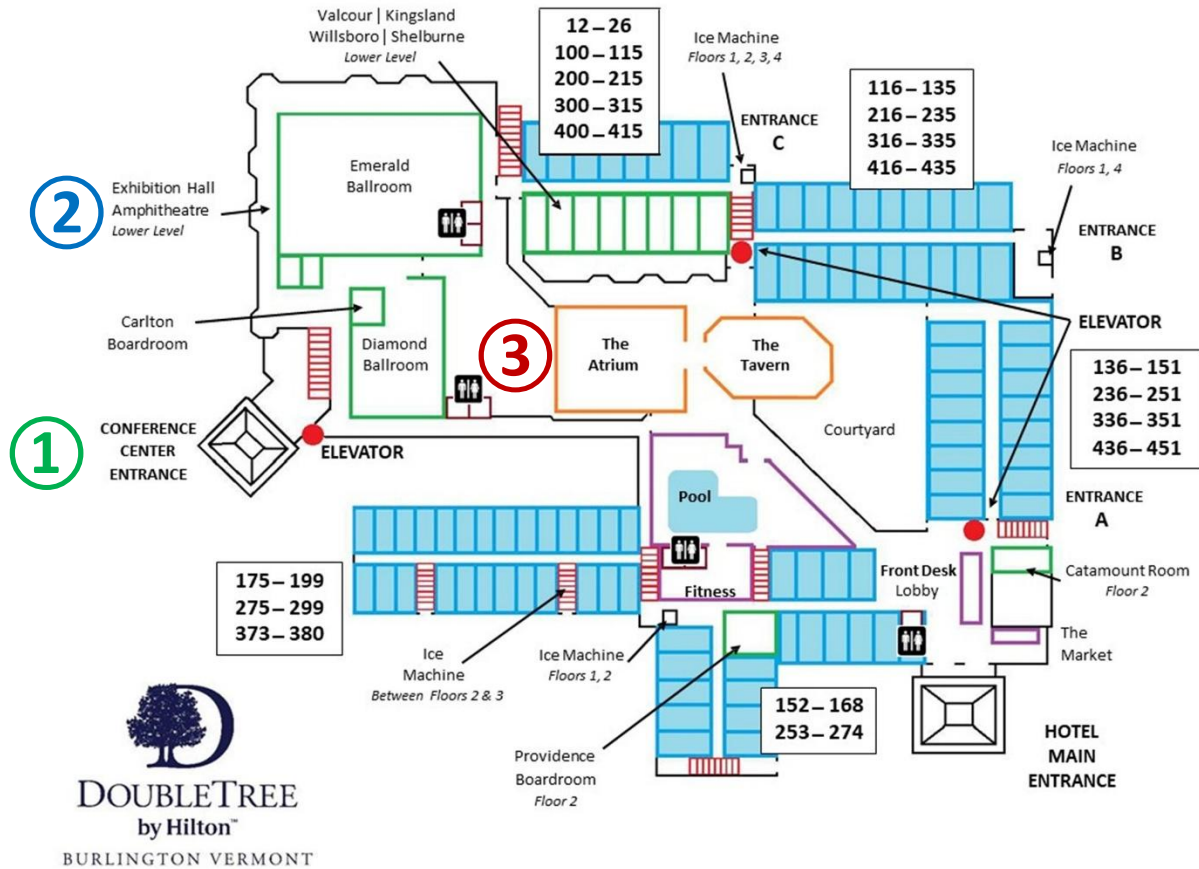
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2 LUNCHEONS Luncheons will be in the Lake Champlain Exhibition Hall, which is on the lower level beneath the two ballrooms.

3 FRIDAY COCKTAIL RECEPTION The Friday cocktail reception will in in the Atrium, across from the Tavern on the hotel's main level.