

The Department of Political Science

ALUMNI NEWSWIRE

2023

DISCOURSE IN DEMOCRACY

A successful year of sponsored events, guest speakers, and student engagement.

INAUGURAL AWARDS DAY

Our first ever department-hosted awards event honoring academic achievement and scholarships.

PI SIGMA ALPHA

PSA has another banner year.

CONTENTS

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR: DR. KENNETH GRASSO



Welcome to the 2023 edition of the Alumni NewsWire. As usual, there's been a whole lot going on in the Department of Political Science.

More than a dozen of our students served as interns during the 88th Session of the Texas Legislature, as well as at the special session that followed; three of our students participated in the 68th Student Conference on National Affairs (MSC-SCONA) at Texas A&M; two of our students presented at the College of Liberal Arts' undergraduate research expo; 30 of our students traveled to Charlotte, NC to participate in the Southern Regional Model United Nations (SRMUN) competition held March 23rd -25th; another 20 or so journeyed to Baylor University to participate in the 26th Annual Eugene Scassa Mock Organization of American States (ESMOAS) competition. At both latter events, our majors dominated the awards. And, perhaps most excitingly of all, one of our majors was named Texas State University's Outstanding Senior for 2023.

Discourse in Democracy, Pi Sigma Alpha, and Supporting Women in Political Science brought a wide array of speakers to campus including Vincent Phillip Muñoz, the Tocqueville Professor of Political Science and Concurrent Professor of Law at the University of Notre Dame; Diana Schaub of Loyola University, Maryland; Justin Dyer, executive director of the Civitas Institute, professor of government, Jack G. Taylor Regents Professor, and interim dean of the School of Civic Leadership at The University of Texas at Austin; the Honorable Antonio Garza, former U.S. Ambassador to Mexico; State Representative Erin Zweiner; Mark Pomar, Senior Fellow at UT-Austin's Clements Center for National Security; San Marcos Mayor, Jane Hughson; Donna Dodgen, the mayor of Sequin; Caleb Henry of Seattle Pacific University; and Ann K. Ganzer, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary (PDAS) in the Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation at the U.S. Department of State.

On the faculty side, members were recognized by Texas State's Alfred H. Nolle Chapter of the Alpha Chi National Honor Society; were recognized by the university for their excellence in scholarship and service; published books with Routledge and Palgrave MacMillan; and published articles and reviews in a wide variety of journals including Global Studies Quarterly, The National Interest, The International Academy of Business Disciplines, The Nonproliferation Review, The Catholic Social Science Review, The Conversation, Government & Opposition, and Party Politics.

Keep reading to get all the details of what we've been up to (and what our alumni have been doing).

And stay in touch! You can reach out to us at politicalscience@txstate.edu with any questions you may have about the department or to update your alumni information.

DISCOURSE IN DEMOCRACY

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ALUMNI NEWSWIRE

Annual magazine for the Texas State
Political Science program.

CHAIR

KENNETH GRASSO, Ph.D.

ASSOCIATE CHAIR

LYNN CROSSETT, J.D.

M.A. PROGRAM DIRECTOR

CECILIA CASTILLO, Ph.D.

UNDERGRADUATE COORDINATOR

SHERRI MORA, Ph.D.

OFFICE MANAGER, DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

DENISE BJERKE

M.A. PROGRAM ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

DODIE WEIDNER

STUDENT DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST

MELISSA RENDON

ALUMNI NEWSWIRE EDITORS

DANIEL WILLIAMS

ERIN FREEMAN

Department of Political Science

Texas State University
601 University Drive
San Marcos, TX 78666

512.245.2143

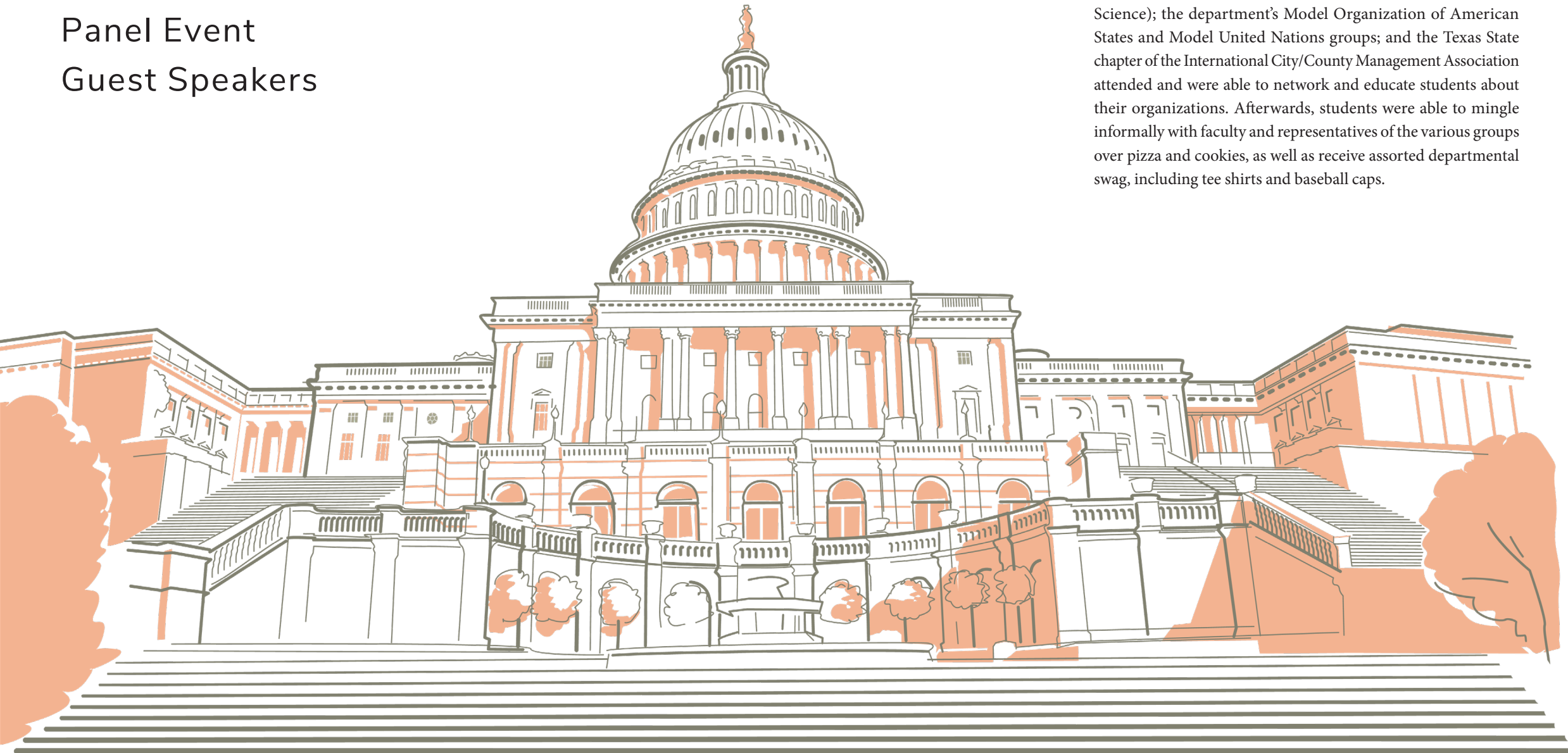
politicalscience@txstate.edu

polisci.txst.edu



DISCOURSE IN DEMOCRACY

Meet the Professors
Alumni Night
Panel Event
Guest Speakers



MEET THE PROFESSORS

Discourse in Democracy (DiD) began the year by hosting the Department of Political Science's annual "Meet The Professors" night. More than 80 students attended the event, giving political science and public administration majors an opportunity to introduce themselves and chat with more than two dozen faculty members to learn about the courses they teach, their areas of interest, and their backgrounds in academia.

Those in attendance had a chance to acquire information about internship opportunities and career building, as well as about various groups associated with the POSI department. Representatives from groups including Pi Sigma Alpha, the national political science honor society; SWIPS (Supporting Women in Political Science); the department's Model Organization of American States and Model United Nations groups; and the Texas State chapter of the International City/County Management Association attended and were able to network and educate students about their organizations. Afterwards, students were able to mingle informally with faculty and representatives of the various groups over pizza and cookies, as well as receive assorted departmental swag, including tee shirts and baseball caps.



ALUMNI NIGHT

On Wednesday, March 8, Discourse in Democracy hosted the department's annual Alumni Night. This event is designed to give current students an opportunity to interact with graduates and learn about their transition from college into the workforce. A panel of four alumni shared their post-graduation experiences with an audience of more than 50 students. The alumni discussed their careers and advised attendees on several topics of professional interest, including developing relationships with faculty members, internships, and curating resumes to their benefit.

The panel consisted of Brian McConnell, a paralegal in the civil division of the Hays County District Attorney's Office; Alexis Anderson, a talent acquisition officer for the Texas Comptroller Office; Buddy Garcia, a former Texas Commission on Environmental Quality member who currently heads a consulting firm; and Mariah "Selene" Gonzalez, the Assistant Director of Federal Affairs at the Texas Public Policy Foundation.

Following the presentations, there was a question-and-answer session and informal conversation between the students and alumni over refreshments and pizza. Students who attended the event were given department swag which included t-shirts, stress stars, lanyards, and pens.

One graduate student in attendance noted that "having an opportunity to speak with individuals who have been in my situation before made me feel much better about my prospects." Another student described the event as "lively and informative," observing that "it was truly inspiring to hear from such a diverse panel of experts."



PANEL EVENT

On March 28, over 70 students and faculty attended a faculty panel sponsored by Discourse in Democracy exploring President Biden's foreign policy. The event featured four political science professors specializing in international relations: Drs. Edward Mihalkanin, Thomas Doyle, Franziska Newell, and Ionut Popescu. The event was moderated by another member of the department's faculty, Prof. Vance McMahan, former United States Ambassador to the United Nations Economic and Social Council. The panelists discussed a variety of timely foreign policy topics like the Biden Administration's national security strategy and nuclear weapons doctrines, questions of international law, democracy promotion and human rights, as well as the domestic politics of U.S. foreign policy.

The event concluded with a lively question-and-answer session, where the students and faculty in the audience asked for the experts' views on other topics including the U.S. role in the Ukraine-Russia war, as well as the possibilities of a nuclear exchange.



The Department of Political Science and Discourse in Democracy present:

"Assessing Biden's Foreign Policy at the Halfway Mark"

A Faculty Panel Discussion with Thomas Doyle,
Ed Mihalkanin, Franziska Newell, and Ionut Popescu
Moderated by Vance McMahan

Tuesday, March 28th • 5:00 - 6:15pm • UAC 308

TOPICS:

- China
- Russia
- Ukraine
- Afghanistan
- Iran
- NATO
- North Korea
- International Trade

If you require accommodations due to a disability in order to participate, please contact (512) 249-2600 or email (512) 249-2600 at least 10 business days prior to the event. Texas State is a 508(c)(3) non-profit.

For more information on this event, please contact Ionut Popescu: icp11@txstate.edu



Discourse in Democracy

GUEST SPEAKERS



MUÑOZ



DYER



SCHAUB



GARZA

The DiD lecture series began in September when over 400 students, staff, and faculty attended Discourse in Democracy's annual "Constitution Day" lecture. This year's speaker, **Dr. Vincent Phillip Muñoz**, Tocqueville Professor of Political Science at the University of Notre Dame, presented a lecture on "Religious Freedom, Natural Rights, and Our Forgotten Principles of Constitutional Liberty." The lecture explored the Founding Fathers' understanding of natural rights and religious liberty. Dr. Muñoz contended that the principles which informed the Founders' thinking are largely absent from the understandings of religious liberty championed by both contemporary progressives and conservatives. He further argued that a return to their vision of freedom, natural rights, and liberty might help to bridge today's partisan divisions.

In addition to the lecture, Dr. Muñoz hosted a seminar for two dozen political science majors focusing on whether human beings possess natural rights. Liam Trepane, a political science student



who attended the seminar, described it as "an excellent discussion of natural rights and why we inherently treat humans differently than we treat animals." M.A. student Kyle Turner said he enjoyed how the seminar led by Dr. Muñoz "challenged conceptions of justice through the lenses of natural law." Additionally, Turner "thoroughly enjoyed" the opportunity to read and discuss the selected readings by Dr. Muñoz entitled "What is an Establishment of Religion?" and "Defending American Classical Liberalism."



The second installment of this year's DiD lecture series took place in November when nearly 300 students, staff, and faculty attended a lecture event led by **Dr. Justin Dyer**, the Jack G. Taylor Regents Professor at The University of Texas at Austin. His lecture, "Natural Law and The Antislavery Constitutional Tradition," explored the Constitution's treatment of slavery and the tension that the continued existence of slavery in the nineteenth century created between practice and principle.

In addition to the lecture, Dr. Dyer hosted a seminar for two dozen political science majors exploring the intellectual roots of the American constitutional system. One political science graduate student who attended the lecture commented that "Justin Dyer was an interesting speaker. His lecture cast a lot of light on how the Constitution was used to support the antislavery position in nineteenth-century America, and the seminar raised some intriguing questions about the impact of classical and Christian political thought on the founding and the nature and limits of social contract theory."

Dr. Dyer's books include *Liberal Education and Citizenship in a Free Society*; *American Soul: The Contested Legacy of the Declaration of Independence*; *Natural Law and the Antislavery Constitutional Tradition*; and *The Classical and Christian Origins of American Politics*.



The first DiD lecture of the spring semester took place in February. Over 200 students, staff, and faculty attended this event led by **Dr. Diana Schaub** of Loyola University in Maryland. Her lecture, entitled "The Second Inaugural: Lincoln's Rhetoric of Reconciliation," explored how Lincoln's second inaugural sought to unite the nation in the closing weeks of the American Civil War.

In addition to this event, Dr. Schaub hosted a seminar for around two dozen undergraduate and graduate students. The seminar explored Frederick Douglass's famous "Oration in Memory of Abraham Lincoln," a speech that was delivered at the unveiling of the Freedmen's Monument in Lincoln Park on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C.

Thomas Hatfield, a political science graduate student who attended the lecture, commented that "Dr. Schaub's lecture on Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address was highly informative and spoke to the character of the man who expressed it. Lincoln's address was filled with both hope for the Union and acknowledgement of the obstacles on the road to reconciliation. Dr. Schaub was simply a joy to listen to."

Diana Schaub is a professor of political science at Loyola University Maryland and a Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.



From 2004 to 2009, she was a member of the President’s Council on Bioethics. Her books include *Erotic Liberalism: Women and Revolution in Montesquieu’s Persian Letters; His Greatest Speeches: How Lincoln Moved the Nation*; and *What So Proudly We Hail: The American Soul in Story, Speech, and Song*. A contributing editor to *The New Atlantis*, Dr. Schaub’s work has also appeared in *National Affairs*, *The New Criterion*, *The Public Interest*, *Commentary*, *First Things*, *The American Interest*, and *City Journal*.



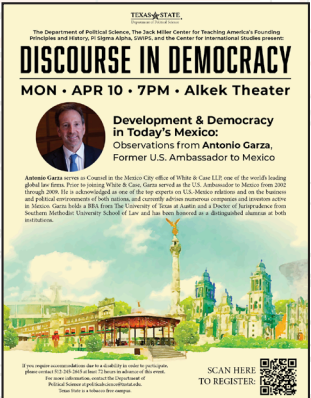
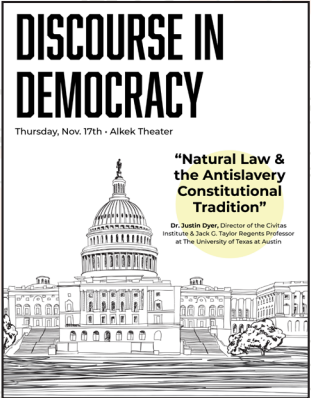
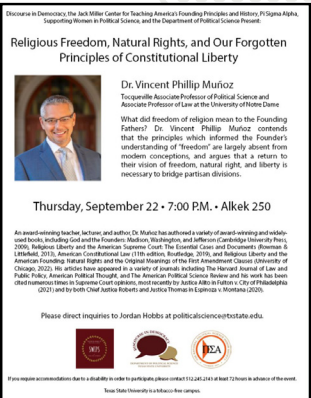
In April, DiD hosted **Antonio “Tony” Garza**, America’s ambassador to Mexico from 2002–2009. Over a hundred students and faculty members attended his talk entitled “Development and Democracy in Today’s Mexico.” The lecture and the Q & A session which followed explored a wide range of topics, including Mr. Garza’s personal experiences as an ambassador, national security strategies, the future of democracy in Mexico, and immigration. Ambassador Garza also spoke about how he got involved in public service and offered advice on pursuing a career in the field.

Prior to the lecture, fifteen students met with Ambassador Garza for dinner. After the meal, he spoke with them about growing up



in Brownsville, as well as his public service career and how he became America’s ambassador to Mexico.

One of the top experts on U.S.-Mexico relations and on the business and political environments of both nations, Ambassador Garza currently serves as Counsel in the Mexico City office of White & Case LLP, one of the world’s leading global law firms. In recognition of his work as ambassador, Mexico rewarded him with the Águila Azteca — the highest award Mexico grants to noncitizens — in 2009.



MODEL ORGANIZATIONS & CONFERENCES

ESMOAS

From November 3-5, Texas State students participated in the 26th Annual Eugene Scassa Mock Organization of American States (ESMOAS) competition at Baylor University. The competition hosted 110 students representing schools throughout the region, including Baylor University, Angelo State University, Texas A&M Commerce, and the National Autonomous University of Mexico. Texas State students, representing the nations of Jamaica, Panama, and Trinidad & Tobago, fielded an eighteen-member delegation that competed in ESMOAS’s Summit of Americas competition, as well as a six-student team that competed in the ESMOAS’ Inter-American Court on Human Rights (IACHR) moot court competition. Debating a host of topics, ranging from improving food and water security to utilizing education to strengthen democratic participation, Texas State students were able to gain valuable skills and gain valuable experience.

Representing Team Jamaica was Alexis Jones, Taylor Tade, Jose Rios, Julia Maldonado, and Newsha Salehkhah. Cadi Powers, Gabbie Lindsay, Prince Kamanda, Ben Nudelman, Kacendra Cyr, and Luis Davila represented Team Panama. Tennyson Moreno, Jaime Castiblanco, Austin Mata, Maddy Morales, and Katie Vosko represented Trinidad & Tobago. Texas State was represented by two teams at the IACHR Moot Court Competition. The first consisted of Mason Melead, Arleth Herrera, Catching Valentinis-Dee, and Marie Frere. The second consisted of Stephen Lara and Isabel Durate.

The team excelled and the competition and won numerous awards. Among the highlights, the moot court team of Mason Melead and Arleth Herrera won Top Legal Team in the IACHR Moot Court Competition. Team Jamaica also won Distinguished Delegation (the second-place team award at the Summit of the Americas

competition). In addition, Ornella Fantoni won the Outstanding Rapporteur Award; Gabbie Lindsay won the special Stegall & Frederick Diplomacy Award; Catching Valentinis-Dee won the Top IACHR Moot Court Orator Award; and Tay Williams was elected President for the 27th ESMOAS competition. Model Organization of American States President Tay Williams speaking on her experience stated that the ESMOAS competition “helped me not only grow in my public speaking, but also in my leadership. It’s an experience that has helped me make life-long friendships and strengthened my self-confidence.”

Political Science Junior Melead said, “The skills I learned relating to formulating an argument, finding supporting evidence, and communicating my thoughts will serve me the rest of my life.” Capping the overall experience, Political Science Freshman, Lindsay said, “this weekend taught me a lot of valuable information



and lessons, especially about how important it is to form relations. This weekend also left me with new friends, and I'm excited to come back next year."

SCONA

Three political science students — Avery Tafelski, Samantha Cortez, and Alex Harder — participated at the 68th annual Student Conference on National Affairs (SCONA) at Texas A&M University earlier this month. The theme of the conference was "Hanging in the Balance: American Leadership in Global Crises." Our students participated in various policy writing workshops with national security experts, listened to former high level government officials explore topics of national importance, and networked with foreign policy professionals from around the country. The students also developed and presented policy proposals to judges, who are practitioners in the international relations field.

Speakers at the event included General Tod D. Wolters, USAF (Ret), former NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe, and Major General Michelle McGuinness, Deputy Director for Commonwealth Integration at the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency.

Avery Tafelski worked on a team focused on coming up with a policy on NATO. Her group proposed a policy on why NATO should get more involved in Africa (specifically in the horn of East Africa) to counteract Chinese influence in the region. Samantha Cortez's team focused on "Manipulating the Message: Curtailing Disinformation in Social Media," while Alex Harder's group's topic was "What's for Dinner? Forming Resilient Supply Chains and Infrastructure." His team focused on strengthening America's supply chain through the creation of AFTAA, Agricultural Free Trade Agreement of the Americas. Their proposal dealt with



diversifying America's imports and exports while proposing tariff incentives to avoid trade wars.

Tafelski was particularly struck by the teamwork aspect of the conference. "Getting to work with my fellow peers on this policy," she noted, "really opened my eyes on what writing an actual policy would look like in my near future. SCONA was an awesome experience, and I would 100% recommend SCONA." Similarly, Samantha Cortez described SCONA as "one of the most significant opportunities of my academic career. Listening to and taking advice from experts at SCONA has changed my perspectives and goals that I plan to pursue throughout my career."

SRMUN

Around 30 Texas State students participated in the Southern Regional Model United Nations (SRMUN) competition held March 23-25 in Charlotte, North Carolina. Students debated numerous global topics ranging from improving systems to assist the families of missing migrants to assisting third states affected by the application of sanctions.

Approximately 600 students, comprising 85 delegations from 45 universities, competed in the SRMUN competition. The universities represented included the University of Kentucky, Auburn University, North Carolina State University, and Georgia Tech.

Texas State students represented the nations of the Federal Republic of Germany, Canada, the Republic of Finland, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, and the People's Republic of China. Highlighting our students' accomplishments, the delegation representing Canada won Distinguished Delegation (2nd Place Overall). This marks the sixth SRMUN competition in a row that Texas State has had at least one delegation placing

in the top three, with Texas State delegations finishing in first place in four of the last six SRMUN competitions.

Bridget Negrete, a Texas State senior, political science major, and Model United Nations President, said, "Participating in SRMUN has always been phenomenal and has given me experiences that I will never forget. Through this conference and the work we put in to prepare for it, I have made friendships that will last a lifetime. SRMUN helped develop a diplomatic skill set, as well as advanced my public speaking abilities in a manner that would not have been possible in a normal classroom setting. Through participating in SRMUN, I feel more confident in my professional abilities as I will be transitioning from the academic setting and into the workforce."



THE COMPLETE LIST OF AWARDS RECEIVED BY TEXAS STATE STUDENTS:

- **Gabbie Lindsay** was awarded Best Delegate (1st Place in Committee), United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine and the Near East (UNRWA).
- **Alexis Jones** and **Catching Valentinis-Dee** were awarded Best Delegate (1st Place in Committee), Economic and Social Council.
- **Julia Maldonado** and **Bridget Negrete** received the award for Best Delegate (1st Place in Committee), General Assembly Plenary.
- **Amber Gulamhusien, Alliyah Valera, Austin Wright, Jordan Shelton, Chandler Barganier, Ethan Amaro, and Gabbie Lindsay** won a group award for Distinguished Delegation (2nd Place Overall), Canada.





POLITICAL SCIENCE & COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS

Awards Day

On Monday, April 29, The Department of Political Science held its inaugural Awards Ceremony. Departmental awards and scholarships were presented by Dr. Sherri Mora, chair of the department's scholarship committee, Dr. Lynn Crossett, Director of the Legal Studies Program, and Dr. Kenneth Grasso, department chair. Dean Mary Brennan distributed College of Liberal Arts Academic Excellence Certificates to juniors and seniors with a GPA of 3.75 or better.

Outstanding Graduate Students



Jordan Villareal



Latoya Uzoukwu



Alexa Browning



Jessica Myers

Outstanding Undergraduate Student

The Richard B. Henderson Political Science Award



Jessica Myers

The Barney & Linda Knight Endowed Scholarship Fund



Stephen A. Lara

The Walter Richter Endowed Scholarship



Mackenzie Acree

The Bettylee & Daniel Farlow Endowed Scholarship in Political Science



Emily G. Morgan

The James H. McCrocklin Memorial Political Science Scholarship Endowment



Gabriel Marquez



Laruen Garcia

The Howard M. 'Prof' Greene Award



Atlanta Flower



Elizabeth Rose Mey



Brianna Kearns



Cotton Rasco



Jessica Myers

Not Pictured:

Joa Brown,
recipient of the Bettylee
& Daniel Farlow Endowed
Scholarship in Political Science

Leann Bohannon,
recipient of the Howard M.
'Prof' Greene Award

PI SIGMA ALPHA

Best Chapter Award, 2021 – 2022

The San Marcos' Rho Eta chapter of Pi Sigma Alpha, the national political science honors society, has been awarded a Best Chapter Award for 2021-2022. These awards are intended to recognize local chapters that are particularly active in their institutions and communities and embody the society's mission to stimulate scholarship and intellectual interest in political science. The award recognizes Nicholas James (chapter president), Francisco Valdovinos (chapter vice president), Grace Schlafer (chapter secretary), Jordan Hobbs (chapter treasurer), and faculty advisor Dr. Casey Wheatland for their leadership and achievements in developing activities supporting student career development despite the significant challenges faculty and students have faced due to the COVID pandemic. Dr. Kelly Damphouse, the university's president, described the award as a "wonderful development."

The award includes a cash prize of \$500 for the chapter. The chapter winners will also be announced across the National Political Science Honors Society's digital platforms, as well as be featured in the American Political Science Association's magazine, *Political Science Today*.

Chapter Rho Eta of Pi Sigma Alpha is the national political science honor society chapter at Texas State University. Open to eligible political science, public administration, and legal studies majors and minors, Pi Sigma Alpha's goal is to connect those interested in politics and policy with a wide variety of professionals from across the state and help members get jobs, internships, and experience before and after college. The Texas State chapter was established in 1988 and over the last thirty years has hosted a variety of lectures and community-service projects.

2022 – 2023 Officers



Francisco Valdovinos
President



Armando Sanchez
Vice President



Grace Schlafer
Treasurer



Maritza Zambrano
Historian

Texas Legislature Panel

On October 20, Pi Sigma Alpha sponsored a panel featuring individuals working in or with the Texas Legislature. Panel members consisted of Texas State University alumni who pursued careers in Texas politics such as Chief of Staff to Texas State Representative Brad Buckley, Vanessa Cortez Tanner, District Director to State Representative Erin Zwiener, Miguel Arredondo, and James Quintero, policy director for the Texas Public Policy Foundation. The panel event offered information on internships, insight into what it is like to work an internship during a Texas legislative session, as well as the panel member's personal experiences and tips about how to land an internship in the Texas capital. Additionally, panel speakers elaborated on what they look for when they hire interns and how to thrive as new interns working in the capital. About 30 students attended the panel event, and following the event, students were given the opportunity to network with the speakers about internship opportunities.

Morghana Armenta, undergraduate student and new member of Pi Sigma Alpha, observed that the panel "presented critical information to students desiring an internship in the capital. The alumni shined a light on their journey from undergrad to a career in Texas Politics. Topics of resume building and standing out as a competitive candidate for the spring legislative session were explored." Coby Johnston, vice president of Pi Sigma Alpha, commented, "many Bobcats were in the room, all eager to learn everything there was to know about working in the capital. These Bobcats discovered that they were a collection of people that could assist anyone looking to work in the capital. Helpful answers to the panelists' questions relaxed the audience and encouraged the flow of additional discussion. The students were obviously excited about the possibility of getting positions in the government."

Induction Dinner

Pi Sigma Alpha's annual induction ceremony for new members took place on April 29th. The organization welcomed 12 new members and celebrated their academic excellence in political science. Dr. Mihalkanin, a political science professor and former San Marcos City Council member, delivered a keynote speech about the importance of civic service and the role of government in promoting the welfare of society. Following the speech, members were able to connect with one another and celebrate a shared passion for political science over dinner.

In addition to inducting new members, Pi Sigma Alpha leadership also acknowledged and commended existing members who secured internships in the Texas capital and jobs working in public policy.



The ceremony concluded with congratulations to all graduating members.

One student who attended the event commented that it "was a wonderful celebration of our members' achievements and a warm welcome to our newest members. It was an excellent reminder of the importance of academic excellence and civic engagement in the field of political science, and we look forward to continuing to promote these values through Pi Sigma Alpha."

Faculty members in attendance alongside Dr. Mihalkanin included professors Bill DeSoto, Emily Cedillo, Ken Grasso, Casey Wheatland, and Hyun Yun.

New Inductees:

- Henry Franco
- Savannah Hoffman
- Claudia Cormier
- Liam Trapane
- Jaime Castiblanco
- Bridget Negrete
- Joa Brown
- Justin Seals
- Sara Trott
- Isabel Duarte
- Brandon Lee Juarez
- Tracy Camacho

SWIPS

SUPPORTING WOMEN IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

Supporting Women in Political Science (SWIPS) is a non-partisan professional education and development organization centered around aiding political science/public administration majors or adjacent students in exploring all facets of political science so that they can discover their professional and academic interests. The organization was established at Texas State University in 2017.

Trivia Event

Some 30 students attended a Trivia Night at George's in the LBJ Student Center sponsored by SWIPS and Pi Sigma Alpha. Participants chatted and played games, and prizes were awarded to the winners. One student who attended the event commented that it was "a memorable evening of intellectual stimulation, delicious food and drinks, and great company."



Watch Party Event

SWIPS sponsored a showing of "Citizens at Last," a film about the fight for women's suffrage in Texas. A conversation followed the discussion. Pizza and drinks were served afterwards. One student noted that "we learned a ton about women's suffrage while enjoying pizza and good company. It was educational, entertaining, and community-building all in one."



Leadership Conference

On Friday, March 31st, Supporting Women in Political Science (SWIPS) hosted a conference event titled "Women's Political Leadership Summit." The conference was put on in order to help connect, engage, and empower women interested in running for office or serving as public administrators.

Students who attended were able to learn from some political professionals about the essential knowledge and skills needed for immediate entry into a career in politics and public administration. Speakers included Donna Dodgen, the current mayor of Seguin, San Marcos mayor Jane Hughson, and State Representative Erin Zweiner. The speakers addressed topics such as overcoming challenges in the workplace, accomplishments since taking office, and their backgrounds in the field of political science.

The event, organized by SWIPS vice president Serenity De Leon, had an assortment of drinks, snacks, and cake for faculty and those who attended.



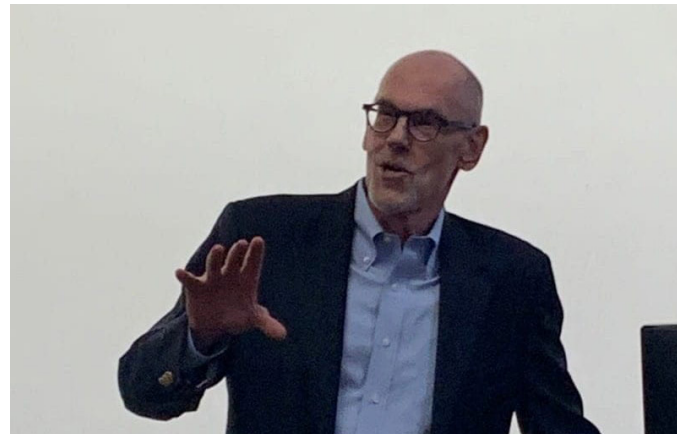
Guest Speakers

Dr. Mark Pomar

On November 3, 30 Texas State students had the opportunity to attend a book presentation by Dr. Mark Pomar, a senior scholar at the University of Texas at Austin's Clements Center for National Security. Drawing on his experience as a former assistant director of the Russian Service at Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, director of the USSR Division at the Voice of America, and executive director of the Board for International Broadcasting, his book, *Cold War Radio: The Russian Broadcasts of the Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, explores how the United States used public diplomacy and international broadcasting to help bring the Cold War to a successful and peaceful ending. Dr. Pomar recounted anecdotes from his time in the Soviet Union and Germany in the 1980s, including interactions with the Soviet Communist Party leaders, and explained the key role played by Radio Free Europe and Voice of America in bringing truthful news accounts to the people living under government censorship in the Eastern bloc.

Aaron Holland, political science graduate student, observed that “anyone with an interest in researching the role that broadcasting can have with regards to influencing international relations should read Dr. Pomar’s book.”

An interesting sidelight is that one of the department’s long-time faculty members, Dr. Arnold Leder, has extensive experience in the world of international broadcasting, having served as Senior Policy Analyst for Islamic and Turkic Peoples of the Caucasus, Turkey, and Central Asia for Radio Liberty at Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty in Munich, Germany (now located in Prague, The Czech Republic), and as Chief of the Azerbaijani Service of The Voice of America in Washington D.C. Indeed, he worked with Dr. Pomar while at Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.



Dr. Caleb Henry

On Monday, November 7, Dr. Caleb Henry of Seattle Pacific University spoke to Dr. Casey Wheatland’s *Basic Political Ideas* class on the subject of religion and politics. Dr. Henry’s presentation focused on the questions of power and sovereignty in the context of the rise of the modern state, and how American constitutional law addresses these issues.

Additionally, Dr. Henry also explored the relevance of the thought of several of the thinkers the class has been studying (including Aristotle, Plato, Hobbes, and Montesquieu) to modern American politics and the ongoing debates over the free exercise clause of the First Amendment. The talk was followed by a wide-ranging question and answer session on the relationship between religion and politics, both in the American experience and in the history of political philosophy.



State Department Officials

On September 13, Dr. Ionuț Popescu moderated a meeting between Texas State students and the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Nonproliferation Policy, Ms. Ann Ganzer.

The high-ranking foreign policy officials shared her experiences working with other countries to stop the spread of nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons around the world. A career diplomat, Ms. Ganzer explained to our students in detail how the United States conducts diplomatic efforts in places such as the United Nations and the International Atomic Energy Agency. She also offered career advice on how to join the State Department, as well as how to prepare for the foreign service exam.

The meeting was co-organized with the Center for International Studies, and it allowed about 25 students from both majors to network with Ms. Ganzer and Mr. Scott Reese, another diplomat present at the event.

Kyle Turner, a graduate student interested in a career in government, remarked how “she was very helpful in better understanding the diplomatic corps’ daily routine and life, as well as insightful with regards to the civil service opportunities in the State Department’s Washington headquarters.” Student attendee, Jordyn McClinton, stated that “hearing experienced individuals speak on their path to working in the state department was enlightening” and “helped me

step back and consider my goals with my degree after graduation.” McClinton remarked how Ms. Ganzer was “very personable, and even stayed after to answer individuals’ questions, allowing us to hear about how we, individually, can make it to the State Department.”



RESEARCH EXPO

On Friday, April 28, two students from the political science department participated in the College of Liberal Arts’ Annual Research Expo. The expo is an online showcase of the research of the college’s undergraduate students, including oral presentations and an online poster session. Political science majors Atlanta Flower and Juliette Cortes participated in this event. Atlanta presented a poster titled “The Cost of Maintaining a Nuclear Future: How Lobbying Affects the Continuance of the Nuclear Arsenal,” and Juliette gave an oral presentation titled “Just Hanging On: The Rise of Euroscepticism and its Consequences.”

In regard to her research and presentation, Cortes said, “My paper was about the causes for the rise of both Euroscepticism and nationalism across Europe, as well as highlighting some of the consequences these ideologies could have on the EU. More specifically, I looked at the Eurozone crisis and the immigration crisis as two events that increased the adoption of these ideologies and their impact on the EU.”

TEXAS CIVIC AMBASSADOR

Political science major Serenity De Leon has recently been selected to serve as a Texas Civic Ambassador by the Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life.

The TCA program is designed to cultivate greater civic participation among youth. Texas Civic Ambassadors participate in this year-long program, leading an educational outreach project on their respective campuses. The projects are designed to meet a community need through civic engagement and participation. In her role as a Texas Civic Ambassador, Ms. De Leon plans to lead a conference to connect, engage, and empower women who have an interest in running for office and serving as public administrators. The conference will feature a panel with local and state elected officials and public administration representatives. The conference will connect students with these representatives through a networking session.

A senior, Ms. De Leon currently serves as a representative of the Honor Code Council and the inaugural Texas State Stelos Scholars program. In addition, she leads as the President of the National Society of Collegiate Scholars, Vice President of Supporting Women in Political Science (SWIPS), and as a Student Fellow for the Beto campaign. Additionally, Ms. De Leon served for two years as a senator for Texas State University. Finally, she volunteers as Texas Central Regional Marketing Coordinator and Challenge Master for Destination Imagination, a global educational non-profit dedicated to inspiring the next generation of innovators, leaders, and creative problem solvers.

OUTSTANDING SENIOR

Political science major Jessica Myers is the winner of Texas State University’s 2023 Outstanding Senior Award. This award, presented annually at the May commencement, is based on leadership, scholarship, character, potential, and loyalty to Texas State University.

A dual minor in honors and economics, Jessica is the president of Supporting Women in Political Science (SWIPS), and she has been a Democracy Fellow with the Campus Vote Project since 2020. Jessica published an article in Texas State’s undergraduate research journal (TXSTUR) on American conspiracy theory and is now also an editor of the journal. She has previously worked as a Building Manager for the LBJ Student Center, and she now works for a Texas State alumnus at the Capitol as a lobbyist.

RECENT GRADUATES

RAMIRO GONZALEZ



I graduated in December 2022. I became interested in political science when I started a policy debate program at my high school. I wondered if politics could be perfected to fit the needs of the masses. Naturally, I started paying more attention to the way that public entities interacted with businesses, consumers, and the market. At first, I was interested in foreign affairs because the debate topic of my sophomore year involved diplomacy between the United States and China. But then I became invested in state and local politics, which contributed to my work in partisan and nonpartisan campaigns across Hays County, and now my work for Texas.

My undergraduate degree in political science exposed me to the plethora of issues that businesses and cultures face in confronting the advances and regressions of law in federal, state, and local governments. Texas State University taught me the importance of education. This included keeping my grades high, maintaining relationships with professors, staying ahead of my workload, making friends with class peers, and being involved in various extracurricular activities. I learned how important it is to be detail-oriented because the little things make a big difference over time. Additionally, I learned how important it is to use the opportunities that are given to you. My degree also influenced me to narrow down my career specialties and use my political background to lobby for prospective causes as an experienced and credible professional in the field. A couple of classes offered by the department that I am very thankful for include “analytical techniques/quantitative research in political science” and “public policy process.” The lessons I learned, both academic and professional, continue to influence my success in my current profession in public policy. I

appreciate Dr. Yun and Dr. Longoria greatly. It is no coincidence that their teachings and style of instruction have rubbed off on students like me, inspiring first-generation students to challenge themselves and propel forward. I find myself applying the principles and the skills that these classes—among many others at Texas State University—taught me, making me feel confident in my current work, and in pursuing a fulfilling career.

After graduation, I immediately transitioned into working for a non-partisan office of the Texas Senate, conducting confidential research and performing analysis on hundreds of bills filed in the 88th Legislature. Bills can be one page to hundreds of pages long. Not surprisingly, during the session, I worked long hours seldom enjoying the pleasure of a standard 9:00-5:00 workday. One time I even stayed until 1:00 a.m., and I was commuting from San Marcos to Austin at the time. It was stressful, but worth the sacrifice.

As a research associate, I am currently working on a publication to be named “Highlights of the 88th Legislature,” which includes all the committees and their respective legislation that was sent to the Governor. I am in charge of 60+ bills in the Veterans Affairs and Administration committees. My assignments include legislation that was vetoed, because statute requires analysis for all the enrolled bills, regardless of success beyond the legislature.

In my future career, I hope to work in the agriculture business and lobbying. Specifically, I hope to be a stakeholder in the regenerative agriculture industry. Ideally, I would like to aid in producing solutions to key issues facing the industry. I dream of one day opening up a brewery using locally sourced hops and barley from Texas farmers.

NICK JAMES



I graduated in the spring of 2022 with a Bachelor of Arts in political science and a minor in communications. Just a few weeks later I began working on my Master of Arts in political science, which I completed in the summer of 2023.

I had initially wanted to be a petroleum engineer but quickly learned I was good at neither math nor science and needed to find an alternative. After attending Governor Gregg Abbott's first victory party in 2014 and being subsequently rejected from Texas State University, I decided to dive head-first into politics and see what I could make of myself. I began working as an unpaid intern in the office of Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick in 2015 during my final year of high school while simultaneously taking dual credit courses at Austin Community College (ACC).

I worked a variety of jobs both in and outside the capitol while taking classes at ACC to repair my GPA. After much hard work, three years later in 2018, I again applied to Texas State but this time, I was accepted. Shortly thereafter, I left my position in the capitol to pursue a degree in political science. At long last, in the spring of 2022, I became the first in my family to graduate from college. Not wanting to set the bar too low for future generations, four weeks after graduation I began working on my master's degree in political science, which I completed the following year.

Like many other recent grads from across the nation will tell you, a degree can only get you so far these days. In fact, I argue that the people I met, the conversations, experiences, and opportunities I had, are just as, if not more, important than my degrees. I cannot stress enough the importance and value I place on the friendships I made with students and professors alike. As a first-generation student, I would have been walking blind if it were not for Dr. Thomas Varacalli, whom I am now happy to call my mentor and friend. Prof. Varacalli was like no other. When in his office, it was constantly filled with students discussing old and new ideas alike for hours on end and when he wasn't in his office, you could find a variety of students eagerly awaiting his return to pick up right where they had left off.

This group of students, the Varacallians as some would call us, knew no race, gender, grade, or political ideology. All we wanted to do was discuss and debate ideas, hoping that with every new proposition, we might learn something new. Dr. Varacalli sponsored many, many, student organizations during his time at Texas State, one of which was the political science honor society Pi Sigma Alpha or PSA. He mentioned PSA, like many other student groups post-COVID, could use some assistance, and within a semester I had taken over as president.

With the help of some friends and the support of other professors like Dr. Yun, Dr. Grasso, Dr. Popescu, Dr. Wheatland, and Prof. McMahan, PSA brought in speakers from across the nation, political consultants from Austin, former Texas Railroad Commissioners, and so many more. I am happy to say that many current and former PSA members worked in and around the capitol during the 88th Legislative session earlier this year because of the connections they made during their time in our organization. From becoming president of the political science honor society to teaching a class of more than 100 freshmen and sophomore students, Texas State afforded me opportunities I had never considered possible.

I returned to Austin and now work for a think tank as a policy analyst, specializing in energy, natural resources, and environmental policy. Working in politics is a winding road with few instruction manuals. Like programs created to help first-generation college students navigate new and unfamiliar environments, I hope to do the same for people passionate about politics and public policy.

AVA STUART



I graduated in August 2022. I have always had a keen interest in politics, but it was during my freshman year of high school that I realized the importance of becoming more educated on political topics. Living in a small town with differing viewpoints, I wanted to engage in discussions with an informed perspective. Political science seemed like the natural next step for me, as it provided a deeper understanding of political issues and their connection to the legal sphere, which further piqued my interest in pursuing a legal education.

My experience in the political science program at Texas State University exposed me to various challenging and engaging classes, fostering an environment where I could ask questions and expand my knowledge. Additionally, through various information sessions on continuing education, I gained insights into potential career paths. Since high school, I have aspired to attend law school, and my time at Texas State provided valuable exposure to the legal field through my classes and the pre-law advising I received. As a result, I feel well-prepared to make informed decisions regarding my future education and career.

The faculty members that impacted my experience the most in the Political Science Department at Texas State were Dr. Varacalli, Dr. Mora, Dr. Kens, Dr. Newell, Prof. Arnold, and Dr. Doyle. Dr. Varacalli encouraged my academic involvement at a time when COVID made education incredibly difficult. Dr. Mora co-taught an insightful Texas politics class, always offering a challenging perspective. Dr. Kens taught my first constitutional law class. While academically demanding, he also displayed empathy which was imperative during the pandemic. Dr. Newell was one of the most patient and knowledgeable professors that I have had. Taking International Law with her was one of my favorite experiences at Texas State. Prof. Arnold taught both Model UN and Model OAS, both of which gave me confidence in public speaking and critical thinking in conflict management. Last but not least, I thoroughly enjoyed my two courses with Dr. Doyle. That he was one of the most demanding professors I have had made it all the more rewarding when I received high marks in his courses.

Since graduation, I have been fortunate to embark on a fulfilling professional journey. Shortly after completing my studies, I secured a position on a political campaign. Once the campaign ended, I transitioned to working on another runoff election campaign, where I had the opportunity to engage in block walking and gain insights into grassroots organizing. As the campaign season concluded and I sought my next steps, I looked for positions in the Texas Capitol and ultimately landed the role of Legislative Director in the office of Texas State House Representative Erin Elizabeth Gámez. This position has provided me with continuous learning opportunities from experienced professionals, many of whom are alumni of Texas State.

During the 140-day legislative session, my role was everything from policy analyst/advisor to intern overseer to scheduler. As a policy analyst, I was assigned several bills to follow through the legislative process. I prepared lengthy briefing materials and analyzed and tracked legislation. Working in the Texas Legislature requires effective management of both high-stress situations and routine tasks. Outside of the legislative session, constituent outreach has become one of my primary duties. Working in the legislature is a job that you either love or hate, and it has been one of my favorite challenges so far.

Since starting my current position in January of this year, I have come to realize that it aligns with my long-term career goals. The opportunity for continuous learning and the ever-changing political landscape makes it an ideal fit. What matters most to me is making a meaningful difference on issues that are important to me.

ALUMNI

PROFILES



Ben Ernst

I graduated with my M.A. in Political Science (with concentrations in Political Theory and International Relations) in 2010. One of the things that spurred my interest in political science was the fact that so often people seem to “talk past” each other during politically charged arguments. I have family members who are passionate about their various perspectives on politics, and I was always very sensitive to the assumption people seemed to make that those who saw things differently from them were either dumb or evil. My first degree was in history, and I am drawn to the history of ideas and how they evolve, so I was naturally drawn to political theory out of sheer curiosity.

After I finished my M.A. at Texas State, I went from teaching English as a Second Language part-time at Northwest Vista College in San Antonio to a full-time staff position in the department. Then I got the opportunity to be a pilot in the United States Air Force, and

I went for it and never looked back. I was a C-17A Globemaster III pilot stationed out of Travis Air Force Base, California. That jet is truly the workhorse of the Air Force and a great way to see the world. I got to travel to Tokyo, Sydney, London, and Paris, and several other cities and see much of the world (and yes, Baghdad and Kabul too). I came back to Texas to teach instructor pilots at Randolph Air Force Base in the San Antonio area, which is a hugely rewarding experience.

The skills I sharpened in the M.A. program help me to better teach student pilots. I think that a degree in the liberal arts can be very enriching on its own merits, regardless of the career outcome. When you’re in your early 20s, in so many cases, your personality, mindset, and belief system have not even fully developed yet. A degree like this provokes a lot of deep thought on important issues and pushes you to think critically and write with purpose. It is worth it to build the skill sets required to read difficult long-form narrative books that you otherwise would not read and then form a cogent written paper responding to what you read. You’re forced to take a definite position but at the same time to acknowledge the complexity and nuances of the argument. That is a skill set that will serve you well in any number of career paths.

Looking back at my time at Texas State, I stumbled upon political theory by accident when I took a class called “Crisis in Liberalism” taught by Dr. Grasso. It was such an eye-opening set of readings and lectures that I began taking whatever course he had to offer each semester. I liked how political theory informs how ideas have developed and gotten handed down, and I liked that they weren’t policy-focused or overtly partisan. Other professors who were highly influential on my way of thinking were Dr. William

Ruger (now at the American Institute for Economic Research) and Dr. Ed Mihalkanin, who really trained me on how to think critically about international relations theory and international political economy.

My advice to undergraduate and graduate students would be to check your ideology at the door. You’re not here to convince people of partisan views, so take the professors who might challenge your assumptions and try to explore different schools of thought and deepen yourself. Like the great Ferris Bueller, you should avoid “condoning fascism, or any -ism for that matter.”



Wilson Pemboh

“I enrolled at Texas State University in the Spring of 2018. Just at the end of the first semester, I was recalled for an active-duty military assignment. After a year-long leave of absence, I returned to complete my program and graduated in August 2020 with a Master of Arts degree in political science. When I first applied to the program, I received conditional admission. By the end of the first semester, I was recommended for academic honors and was subsequently elected to the Phi Kappa Phi Academic Honors Society.

Since my graduation, I worked briefly with the Texas Department of Public Safety prior to accepting an offer to pursue a Ph.D. at Texas Tech University. I am currently engaged in a Congressional internship program as a Research Fellow in Washington, D.C. as part of my program. I am honored to be assigned to the office of Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee from the 18th congressional district of Houston, Texas.

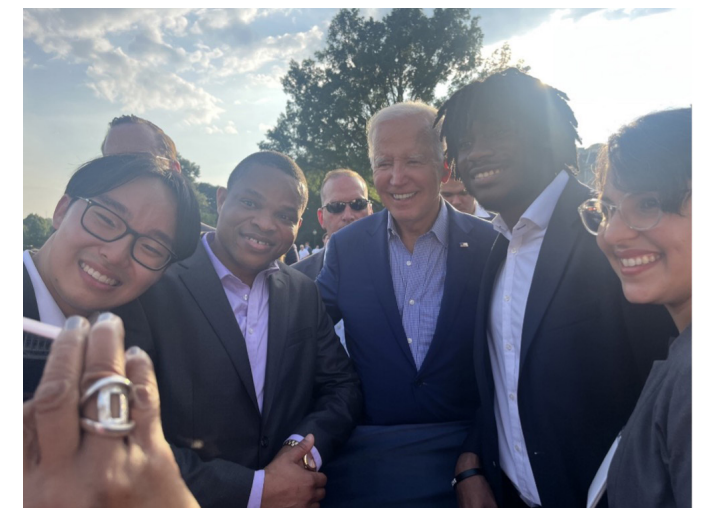
As a Legislative Fellow, I have had the opportunity to staff some high-profile meetings, White House briefings, and Congressional Committee hearings. With that, I had the opportunity to visit the White House on two separate occasions with the congresswoman, in the company of other office staff and colleague interns. We had

the rare honor of meeting the president on one of those visits. The congresswoman personally introduced us to the president during the Annual White House Presidential Picnic on July 19, 2023.

My interest in political science derived from the numerous concerns about ineffective political leadership, lack of strong political institutions, and fragility of democratic governance across the African continent. As such, I aspire to collaborate with well-meaning civil society organizations and governmental and political institutions to contribute toward the nurturing and consolidation of Africa’s emerging and nascent democracies.

My graduate degree from the department of political science has helped to shape my deeper understanding of the political process and global political issues, especially regarding the foreign policy stances of rival states and their effects on less powerful nations in the international political system.

I owe my advancement and success in higher education to the entire faculty of the political science department at Texas State University, who guided me to discover higher levels of academic excellence and confidence that I never thought existed within me. Drs. Cecilia Castillo, Walter Wright, Kenneth Ward, Hyun Yun, Omar Sanchez-Sibony, and Ken Grasso deserve special mention. These professors have all been exceptionally inspirational to me in their unique mentorship and advisory roles, and I remain indebted to every single one of them.



We live in “interesting times.” To the upcoming generation of students of political science, I can assure you that these challenges equally present new opportunities. As President John F. Kennedy once intimated, in your hands “would rest the final success or failure” of this great nation’s course. I challenge current undergraduate/graduate students in political science not to “shrink from this responsibility,” but to welcome it as an opportunity to make a difference.

As a modestly talented student, I have had to overcome obstacles and challenges throughout my educational and career endeavors. While I currently face such challenges with progress in my higher academic pursuits, I remain confident that I will overcome the odds and excel in that endeavor. For me, life has never been about where one started, but more about the odds that one strives to overcome.



Anthony Davis

I received my B.A. degree in 2019 and my M.A. degree in 2021. When I was younger, I was leaning towards electronics and computer science, but two things changed my mind. First, I was curious because politics was something people talked about, but something that I didn’t really know much about. Secondly, I discovered that managers and supervisors were having concerns over the loss of critical thinking, something the liberal arts like political science trains you in.

Since graduating, I’ve done a wide variety of things, including becoming the Information Technology Officer for the Hays County Historical Commission, and an Internal Auditor with the Texas Health and Human Services Commission. As to how my training in political science helped me, the answer is that I got hired because of it! Where I work, most people have MBA and MS degrees, but they wanted someone with expertise in things like research, critical thinking, and reading skills. I, thanks to my political science training, fit the bill.

The class and professor that had the most impact on me were State and Local politics and Dr. William DeSoto. He really did a great job of raising open-ended questions and allowing students to come to their own conclusion, assess the merits of various arguments, and see both sides of a question. Even if I disagree with people, I can at least understand why people come to those conclusions. It may seem silly to see that as a skill, but when you’re brainstorming or discussing different methodologies for projects and trying to

understand clients and the public at-large before making a decision, is a powerful tool at your disposal.

In terms of what advice I’d offer to undergraduate and graduate students in political science, I’d tell them to focus not only on what the laws say and what institutions compose the government (the nuts and bolts of government institutions), but on how laws and governments are created and how they actually work. Here’s where the true breadth of knowledge and education of political science is found. Too many people view college as a means to get a high-paying job, rather than as a place where you can investigate how the world works. Given the serious political problems we face, a deeper understanding of politics is crucial.

CALL TO ALUMNI:

Did you graduate from one of our programs? We’d love to hear from you! Check out the Alumni page on our website, where you can reconnect with us, tell us what you’re up to, and share some advice for our current students.

Scan Here:



INTERN PROFILES



Francisco Valdovinos

My internship took place at a lobbying firm named Congress Avenue Partners, located in Austin, and spanned the entirety of the Texas 88th Legislative Session. I was fortunate to work with four lobbyists, each of whom represented and advocated for a diverse group of clients.

My responsibilities included crafting one-pagers on topics relevant to our clients supplying them with essential and accurate data about specific bills; writing summaries of bills as they advanced through the legislative process; writing a weekly newsletter that summarized the week’s activities at the capital; and conducting the research necessary to draft comprehensive bill analyses.

One of the key things I’ve learned is the importance of asking questions and of managing my time (which is crucial given that there’s a lot to do and that the legislature is only in session for 140 days).

My advice to students is simple: Start networking as soon as possible! Join student groups, and chat with your professors about potential career opportunities. Also, it’s beneficial to know how to showcase your abilities. Prioritize taking the initiative and don’t fear failure! If setbacks happen, pick yourself up and keep on moving forward.

My government affairs internship with a lobbyist and Texas State alumnus started in October of last year and is still ongoing.

My role involved on-the-ground and digital research about committee hearings and bill action during the 88th Texas legislative session. I combined this research with the writing skills I developed at Texas State to help my bosses send weekly newsletters and summary reports to their clients about legislative goings-on in what was an eventful session as well as making sure my bosses had the most up-to-date information possible.

This was my first legislative session (and I hope it’s not the last), and I took it as an opportunity to keep an open mind about political decision-making. I learned how state policy is actually developed and really tried to understand the values and reasons behind the ideas, decisions, and even people that I don’t immediately relate to.

I would invite prospective interns to adopt the same mindset. While it’s tiring work, you learn so much. Curiosity was one of my greatest assets during the session, so my advice is to stay curious about how the office you’re applying to operates, what their values are, and how you can best help them accomplish their goals.



Jessica Myers



**Ornella
Fantoni**

My internship took place at the House Sergeant at Arms office from February 2023 — May 2023. I was fortunate to have been offered a job from this internship, so I still currently work at the Sergeant’s office.

I worked alongside representatives and their staff to ensure confidentiality by hand-delivering messages and bills around the capitol complex in a timely and professional manner. I also collaborate with DPS to maintain decorum in the House chamber and committees.

One key thing I learned is the importance of communication and trust. Especially during a busy and sporadic legislative session much like this one, you need to communicate with and have trust in your colleagues.

My advice for anyone looking for an internship would be to check the Texas House website frequently for openings.



**Olivia
Alexander**

I was an intern at the Texas Capitol for one legislative session. I was responsible for the nominations committee and constituent services. While at the capitol, I was able to use my firsthand experience at Texas State University to write my first bill. This bill was referred to the Higher Education Committee, and ultimately added to a bill that was signed by the governor.

The most important thing I learned was how to address topics and treat people during stressful situations. I was lucky enough to work for Senator Bryan Hughes, who is an amazing example of how to get a lot of things done while treating people with respect.

My advice to students would be to apply for any internships that may interest them because you learn so much and meet so many different people throughout your internships.

During the 88th Legislative session, I served as a Legislative Staffer for Dr. Brad Buckley, Chairman of the House Committee on Public Education, representing District 54 of the Texas House of Representatives. In this role, I provided comprehensive support by conducting research, drafting memos, and assisting in committee hearings.

Working closely with Dr. Buckley and the committee members, I gained firsthand experience in the legislative process and developed skills in research, analysis, and effective communication. It was a transformative experience that solidified my commitment to public service and advocating for impactful policies in the field of education.



**Morghan
Armenta**



**Madeline
Tillman**

I worked in a Texas representative’s capitol office both prior to, and during, the 88th session and the interim before. During my time at the capitol, I learned just how much work and research is involved in drafting legislation. As a legislative aide prior to the session, my main responsibility consisted in doing research in an area, seeing what policies other states were implementing, and determining how effective what these states were doing.

During the session itself, I was tasked with analyzing various bills and working with constituents. If you enjoy researching and watching ideas, working at the capitol is a great option. The experience and connections I have made in this experience are priceless!



**Brianah
Wallace**

During the 88th Legislative session, I served as Office Manager in the Sergeant at Arms Office. Some of my duties included developing staff and event schedules, assigning and monitoring work, implementing productivity standards, coordinating, and overseeing all official events and visits to the Texas House chamber and gallery, including state officials and guests while they attend Capitol events, and working closely with the Sergeant at Arms.

Working with the House Sergeant’s office granted me the unique opportunity to be a part of the legislative process, an important and fundamental process that ultimately affects everyone’s life. When I first started my job, I thought I had a good understanding of the political process, but quickly realized that I didn’t. Now, I’ve had the opportunity to learn the ins and outs of the political process. Many people haven’t had that same privilege, and thanks to my experience here, I have been able to help those people better understand the political process. They need to know that they are as much a part of the process as any elected official and that they hold just as much power.

The advice I would give to any student looking for a job or internship at the capitol is to be passionate! You need to be passionate and intentional about the work you do to really make an impact.

During my internship, I had the incredible opportunity to work in Representative Lopez’s office at the Texas State Capitol. Prior to that, I gained valuable experience as an intern with The Garcia Group, under the guidance of Mr. Joe Garcia, a distinguished Texas State Alumni and former Chief of Staff for the Honorable Eddie Lucio.

Legislative directors play a crucial role in coordinating and managing the legislative process. As Representative Lopez’s Legislative Director, I worked closely with the representative to develop and implement legislative initiatives, analyze proposed bills, and provide recommendations based on their alignment with our policy priorities and the needs of our constituents. I also oversaw the legislative team, coordinating their efforts, drafting legislation, and building coalitions to advance our legislative agenda. We worked tirelessly to represent the interests of our constituents and make a positive impact on the lives of the people we serve. I also got to work closely with the Office of the Speaker of the House, committee chairs, and other legislative staff to develop and implement the House’s legislative agenda.

Interning at the Texas State Capitol is an experience that will ignite your passion. It is a chance to immerse yourself in the vibrant world of politics, witness the power of democracy in action, and contribute to making a real difference in the lives of Texans. Witnessing firsthand the inner workings of legislative processes deepened my understanding of public service and inspired me to pursue a meaningful career in politics and advocacy.



**Aaron
Maldonado**

FACULTY NEWS

Alpha Chi Favorite Professors

Two political science faculty members were named favorite professors by Texas State's Alfred H. Noelle Chapter of Alpha Chi National College Honor Society in the spring of 2022. In the fall of 2022, Dr. Paul DeHart was honored with the favorite professor distinction as well. **Drs. Sherri Mora, Paul DeHart, and Omar Sanchez-Sibony** were recognized for their outstanding teaching.

Alpha Chi is a national honor society which promotes academic excellence and exemplary character among undergraduate college and university students and honors those who achieve such distinction.

Professors Recognized by Dean

At the College of Liberal Art's annual General Faculty Meeting, Dean Mary Brennan recognized two members of the Department of Political Science's faculty for their accomplishments. **Dr. Sherri Mora** and **Dr. Ashleen Menchaca-Bagnulo** received Presidential Distinction Awards for Excellence in Service and Excellence in Scholarly/Creative activity, respectively. Additionally, Dr. Sherri Mora received a Golden Apple Award recognizing her contributions to the college.

These awards are issued annually by the university to recognize and reward superior accomplishments, to provide models of excellence for fellow faculty, and to encourage all faculty to continue to perform, improve, and advance their teaching, scholarly and creative activity, and service.



DR. SANCHEZ



DR. DEHART



DR. MORA



DR. MENCHACA-BAGNULO

Faculty of the Year

The Center for International Studies has awarded **Dr. Ionut Popescu** the title of Faculty of the Year. During the 2022–2023 academic year, Dr. Popescu taught IS 4380 (Senior Seminar in International Studies), lectured for the IS 5398 course on U.S. Foreign Policy, and organized several events that have promoted readiness and success for International Relations students—including a meeting with the U.S. Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Ann Ganzer and a series of faculty panels about the Russian-Ukraine conflict and U.S. foreign policy.

Dr. Paul Hart, history professor and director for the Center for International Studies, commented on Dr. Popescu's achievement by saying, "The Center for International Studies is pleased to award Dr. Ionut Popescu the 'Faculty of the Year Award.' Students commented on Dr. Popescu's deep knowledge of the topics addressed, his interactive and supportive manner in the classroom, and his obvious desire to share his knowledge, while letting students express themselves in discussion and in their own oral presentations of their research to the class. The Center thanks Dr. Popescu for his effort and contribution to our graduating students in senior seminar and helping them be prepared for whatever they do next."



SRL Program Acceptance

Dr. Susanne Sternthal, a member of the department's faculty who specializes in Russian politics, has been accepted into the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign's prestigious Summer Research Laboratory (SRL) program. It is sponsored by the Russian, East European, and Eurasian Center (REEEC) and the Slavic Reference Service (SRS) at the University of Illinois. She has been chosen as a scholar in the Title VIII program which is funded by the U.S. State Department, for her promising work in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies.

"This is a very exciting opportunity," Sternthal notes, "as the University of Illinois Library's repositories of sources dealing with Russia are among the best in the country and will be a treasure trove of materials related to my book in progress on Putin." 2023 marks the program's 50th anniversary.

Excellence in Online Teaching



Dr. Vince Bagnulo has been named a runner-up for the 2022 Award for Excellence in Online Teaching for his online course, POSI 2310 – Principles of American Government. Awarded by the Online Teaching Selection Committee and the Office of Distance and Extended Learning (ODEL), the award recognizes superior online teaching, provides models of excellence for fellow faculty, and encourages all faculty to continue to improve and advance their online teaching pedagogy. As one of two runners-up, he received a monetary prize of \$1,250 and an invitation to participate in the annual virtual awards showcase that took place in February.

Dr. Bagnulo teaches in the Honors College as well the department of Political Science. “We are truly proud of Dr. Bagnulo’s achievement,” observed Department chair Ken Grasso. “It is yet another indication of our department’s ongoing commitment to excellence in teaching.”

COLA Salon Series

On Thursday, January 26th, two professors from the POSI department — **Drs. Franziska Boehme Newell** and **Ionut Popescu** – participated in a panel discussion moderated by Dean Mary Brennan as part of the College of Liberal Arts’ Salon Series.

Entitled “The Ukraine-Russia Conflict One Year Later,” the discussion focused on the history of relations between Ukraine and Russia, the current state of the war, and the war’s international implications. Following the interviews, Drs. Popescu and Newell fielded questions from the audience on a wide variety of topics including the possibility of a coup in Russia and what the chances for a peace agreement are and why.

“One of the most worrying things to come out of the war,” Dr. Newell remarked, “has been the vast number of attacks on civilian infrastructure and housing by Russia, that may all be prosecuted as potential war crimes through the International Criminal Court. There are reports of the use of cluster munitions, torture and mass atrocities like in the Bucha suburb of Kiev, attacks on hospitals, churches, and theaters. These things are violations of the laws of war under the Geneva Conventions.” Dr. Popescu spoke about the options the United States has to further the chances for a negotiated peace agreement between Russian and Ukraine”

This College’s Salon Series was founded to foster meaningful discussions about the humanities, and it aims to provide facilitated conversations in an intimate setting with the college of Liberal Arts faculty. During this event, faculty are able to showcase their



research and explain its impact on the world around us. Students, alumni, and friends of the college are invited to meet and engage with faculty to explore a variety of topics and to promote thoughtful dialogue.

Bobcats Back

As part of the Students Involvement Office’s Bobcats Back initiative, the Department of Political Science held an open house on Tuesday, January 26. The event provided new and returning students with the opportunity to meet faculty, staff, and majors from the department and to learn about its various academic programs, student groups, and co-curricular activities, as well as the opportunities it offers for students.

The nearly 200 students who attended were able to grab a snack courtesy of the department and play Spin the Wheel to win departmental swag.



NEW FACULTY

Dr. John Kitch

In fall of 2023, Dr. John Kitch will be joining the political science department. Kitch attended Baylor as an undergraduate and received his M.A. at the University of Oklahoma and his Ph.D. from Louisiana State University. He has previously taught at several different institutions including Beloit College, Rutgers, Northern Illinois University, and the University of Missouri. A native of Waco, Kitch enjoys baseball and cooking. He and his wife have a 6-year-old daughter and love spending time outside. He is interested in a range of topics in American politics, including political parties, the presidency, and American foreign policy. He is currently working on a book about the Eisenhower administration.



Ezekiel Loseke

In the fall of 2023, Ezekiel Loseke will be returning to Texas State. Loseke received his M.A. in political science from Texas State in 2019 and is in the process of completing his doctoral dissertation at Hillsdale College’s Van Andel Graduate of School of Statesmanship. A specialist in American government and politics, American political development and institutions, and American political thought, his master’s thesis explored the effect of the Supreme Court’s one person, one vote decisions on American political culture, while his doctoral dissertation focuses on Martin Van Buren and the American political party system. He served in the U.S. Navy from 2007–2011 and received his B.A. degree in 2015 from Eastern Washington University.

“Texas State was a wonderful place to earn a master’s degree,” Loseke observed. “I’m really excited to return.”



INKKLINGS

In the early and middle decades of the 20th century, a small group of intellectuals met weekly at Oxford University to read aloud and discuss their works in progress. The meetings were characterized by lively exchange of ideas. The group members called themselves The Inklings, suggesting that their thoughts and works in progress should be taken in the spirit of reflection, criticism, and, sometimes, humor.

In the spirit of the original Inklings, the Department of Political Science at Texas State University has had gatherings and talks over the course of some 20 years in which political science faculty members have presented their thoughts and works in progress.



Dr. Lauren Rowlands

On February 6th, Dr. Lauren Rowlands, a member of the political science faculty, presented at the first Inklings gathering of the spring semester. Entitled, on “Congress and Immigration: A study of the member-level motivations and agenda-setting strategies on immigration reform,” Dr. Rowlands’ talk discussed her research on legislative behavior and what compels House members to vote to expand immigration policy. This research focused on voting records for factors like the amount of labor-intensive farmland present in their districts. She found that the demand for labor factors (generally cheap, immigrant, migrant labor) prominently led to legislators’ propensity to vote to expand/liberalize immigration policy.

Liam Trapane, a graduate student who attended the presentation, says “Dr. Rowland’s presentation really cast light on the factors that influence the voting behavior of members of Congress other than partisan loyalties. She provided a revealing account of their decision-making process and the cost-benefit analyses that affect it.”



Dr. Tom Doyle

The second Inklings gathering of the semester took place on Wednesday, March 8th. Dr. Tom Doyle spoke about “Preserving the Nuclear Taboo After a Nuclear First Use Event.” The talk explored how the logic of the nuclear taboo contrasted with the logic of nuclear deterrence, emphasizing that nuclear retaliation does not uphold the nuclear taboo. Dr. Doyle also reviewed various kinds of nuclear first use and the danger of nuclear escalation leading to global nuclear war.

Colton Halter, a graduate student in the department of political science, attended the event and commented, “Dr. Doyle’s presentation was an incredibly compelling look at nuclear non-use through a lens other than simple deterrence or mutually assured destruction. He explored the concept of the nuclear taboo, the idea that nuclear weapons are not used because of a moral revulsion, and how strengthening that taboo is one of the only ways to truly prevent nuclear war.”

Dr. Vince Bagnulo

On Thursday, October 6th, Dr. Vince Bagnulo delivered an Inklings presentation entitled “Is John Stuart Mill’s *On Liberty* Still Relevant?” After outlining the argument of *On Liberty*, Dr. Bagnulo examined Mill’s idea of progress in light of Auguste Comte’s philosophy of history. He argued that a theory of historical progress, largely drawn from Comte, underpinned Mill’s argument in *On Liberty*. Although the work continues to offer concrete insights on freedom and the dangers of social pressure, Dr. Bagnulo contended that since theories of historical progress, including Comte’s, are generally no longer found plausible, *On Liberty*’s dependence on such theories makes its overall argument less persuasive and less relevant today.

One attendee observed that “Dr. Bagnulo explained Mill’s philosophy in a detailed yet simple manner that was very accessible to students. His exploration of *On Liberty* has piqued my interest in political theory and has landed Mill on my winter reading list. I look forward to seeing how Dr. Bagnulo develops this aspect of his research in the future.”





FACULTY UPDATE

Roger Abshire delivered a paper on “The Structural Case for an Unlimited Article V Convention” at the 2022 Meeting of the Southern Political Science Association in San Antonio.

Ben Arnold coordinated the department’s award-winning Model United Nations and Model Organization of American States programs.

Vince Bagnulo was appointed as the department’s 2310/2320 Coordinator.

Cecilia Castillo participated in a roundtable on “National Conservatism” at the 2022 Meeting of the Society of Catholic Social Scientists at St. Vincent’s College in Latrobe, Pennsylvania.

Paul DeHart’s article “Are Local Governments Mere Creatures of the States?” appeared in *National Affairs* (Spring 2022): 51–64.

William De Soto’s co-authored article, “A Comparison between Australian and US Populations on Attitudes to Criminal Behaviours,” appeared in

Psychology, Crime & Law, (Spring 2022): 115–131.
Another co-authored article of his, “Racial Animus and Its Association with Punitive Sentencing and Crime Types: Do Australian Community Attitudes Reflect the United States?,” appeared in *The Journal of Criminology* (Winter 2022): 23–46.

Tom Doyle published “Preserving the Nuclear Taboo after a Nuclear First-Use Event: A Nuclear Ethical Analysis” in *The Nonproliferation Review* (May 2022): 131–148.

Michael Faber’s article “If Biden Decides Not to Run for Reelection, He Faces a Big Threat: Being a Lame Duck” appeared in *The Conversation*. August 8th, 2022.

Blake Farrar published a co-authored article, “The Spiral of Political Youth Voice: An Application of the Spiral of Silence Theory to Opinion Expression among New American Voters,” in *The International Academy of Business Disciplines* (May 2022): 49–75.

Ken Grasso’s review essay: “David French’s *Divided We Fall: America’s Secession Threat and How to Restore our Nation*,” was published in *The Catholic Social Science Review* (2022): 124–132.

Alex Kroeger co-authored an article, “The Appointment of Women to Authoritarian Cabinets in Africa,” which appeared in *Government & Opposition*, 1–24.

Army Leder directs the department’s Inklings programming.

Vance McMahan coordinated the department’s internship program at the state capitol.

Ashleen Menchaca-Bagnulo delivered a paper on “The ‘Feminine’ Mind?: Prudence and Female Exemplars of Virtue in the City of God,” at a conference on “Augustine and the Frontiers of Pluralism” at Villanova University in Pennsylvania.

Ed Mihalkanin’s chapter “Russia, Georgia, and Abkhazia” appeared in *Reflections on Abkhazia* (Ankara, Turkey: Koyusiyah Publishing, 2022).

Sherri Mora received the Presidential Distinction Award and the College of Liberal Arts Golden Apple Award for Excellence in Service.

The 6th edition of her book *The State of Texas: Government, Politics, and Policy* was published by McGraw Hill Higher Education.

Franzi Boehme Newell’s book *State Behavior and the International Criminal Court: Between Cooperation and Resistance* was published by Routledge.

Her article “Normative Expectations and the Colonial Past: Apologies and Art Restitution to Former Colonies in France and Germany” appeared in *Global Studies Quarterly* (October 2022).

Ionut Popescu’s article “Only Offensive Realism Can Contain China” appeared in *The National Interest* on December 7, 2022. His review of Benjamin Miller’s *Grand Strategy from Truman to Trump* was published on May 27 in *H-Diplo*.

Lauren Rowlands’ co-authored article “Time Dependent Legislative Behavior and Electoral Punishment” was recently published in *Party Politics* (August 2023).

Omar Sanchez’s book, *Democracy Without Parties in Peru: The Politics of Uncertainty and Decay* was published by Palgrave McMillan.

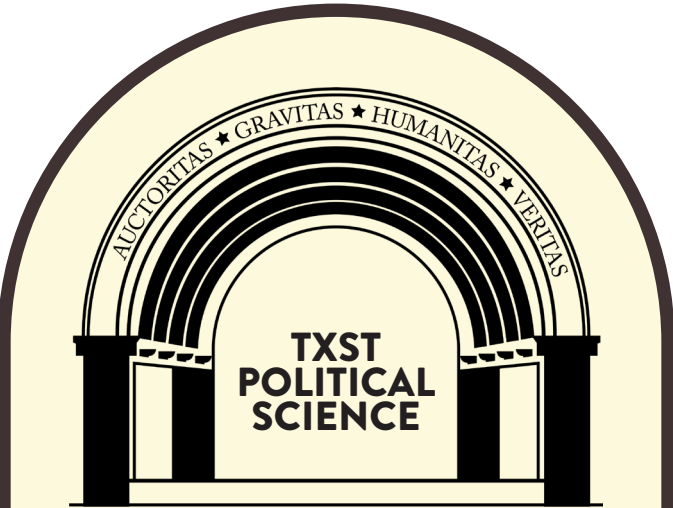
Ken Ward is the university’s official pre-law advisor.

Casey Wheatland presented a paper, “Praetorians: The National Security

State Against the People,” at the American Studies Institute Day at the University of Dallas.

Hyun Yun published a co-authored article, “The Political Youth Voice Spiral: An Application of the Spiral of Silence to Opinion Expression Among Young American Voters,” in *The Quarterly Review of Business Disciplines*, 9(1), 49-75.

Her chapter, “My Professor is Losing Her Mind and So Am I!” appeared in *Teach Political Science with a Sense of Humor*, edited by Kishor Vaidya (Canberra, Australia: Curious Academic Publishing).



Texas State University
601 University Drive
San Marcos, TX 78666

512.245.2143
politicalscience@txstate.edu

polisci.txst.edu





TEXAS STATE[®] UNIVERSITY

Department of Political Science

Undergraduate Academic Center, 355
Texas State University
601 University Drive
San Marcos, TX 78666

P: 512.245.2143

F: 512.245.7815

E: politicalscience@txstate.edu

