



Letter from the Chair Celebrating our May Graduates!

Over one hundred Political Science majors graduated in May (see picture above). Our grads are heading to a variety of destinations. Some of them will enter law schools in the fall, including those at the University of Texas, William & Mary, University of South Carolina–Charleston, Cornell University, South Texas College of Law and the University of Houston. These students and other recent grads will also embark on studies for other types of advanced degrees in the fall, including doctorates in political science, Master’s of Public Policy, and Master’s in International Relations. Many other May graduates are starting or continuing jobs in the political or civic arena. Some of them located these jobs as a result



Graduate Kory Kittel leads majors into the College Convocation

of connections they made and skills they acquired while completing internships t as part of their political science major.

We wish everyone all the best in your upcoming endeavors!

Please keep in touch and let your professors in the Political Science Department know about your accomplishments and your next sets of challenges.

--Susan Scarrow
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Contents

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Alumni News | 2 |
| Conferences at UH | 2 |
| Alumni Spotlight | 2 |
| Faculty News | 3 |
| Carp-Manning Database | 3 |

Summer Time is Research Time

For some people, summer means extra time to go to the beach. For many students and faculty at UH Political Science, summer means extra time to devote to research, and to make headway on big projects that may require travel to collect data or conduct interviews. These students use the summer to participate in research apprenticeships, working on projects of their own under the close supervision of a faculty member, or directly collaborating with a faculty member on a joint project. Some of these valuable research opportunities are funded by scholarships and grants. Here are a few examples:
Economics/political science double major **Joshua Freed** is investigating Thomas Jefferson

on Natural Rights, supervised by Associate Professor **Jeremy Bailey**. This research is sponsored by a grant from the **Jack Miller Foundation**. Political Science major **Maria Ferreira** is researching women presidents in Latin America, supervised by Associate Professor **Eduardo Aleman**. Her research is supported by the UH Summer Undergraduate Research Fund.

Many graduate students are conducting summer research with faculty members; some are supported by competitive grants from the UH Division of Research or the UH College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, or by funds from endowed research chairs. Topics that student-faculty teams are investigating include

courts in Colombia (**Susan Achury** with Associate Professor **Lydia Tiede**), how U.S. governments respond to credit ratings downgrades (**Markie McBreyer** with Assistant Professors **Justin Kirkland** and **Patrick Shea**), the validity of convenience samples for political research (**Phil Waggoner** and **Ryan Jewell** with Assistant Professor **Scott Clifford**) and on political ideology and obedience (**Matt Ward** with Assistant Professor **Scott Clifford**). Funds for summer research pay double dividends: they provide students with hands-on research training, and they lead to research publications. Thanks to the institutions and individuals who support this important work!

Alumni News

Alumni Spotlight:

For the past five years UH alumnus **Vu Dang** has been at the forefront of efforts to strengthen communities and improve the health of neighborhoods in Baltimore. Since 2014 he has served as Assistant Deputy Mayor for Health, Human Services, Education, and Youth. Before that he served for four years as Baltimore's Chief Service Officer. In that position he promoted civic engagement, and worked with community groups, non-profits and government agencies to address problems such as neighborhood blight and youth unemployment.

Vu Dang earned a political science B.A. at UH, and later earned a Master of Public Policy at Harvard University. After graduating from UH he served in the Peace Corps in Guinea (in West Africa). He subsequently worked for the Carter Center, and later as Executive Director of the International Rescue Committee, based in Washington D.C.



Earlier this year Dr. **Isaac Nettey**, a UH PhD in Political Science, was recognized by the University Aviation Association with its William A. Wheatley Award. This annual award is presented to professional educators who have made outstanding contributions to aerospace education. Dr. Nettey (pictured above) currently serves as associate dean at Kent State University's College of Applied Engineering, Sustainability and Technology; he is the former director of former director of the Airway Science Program at Texas Southern University.

Ambassador **Dr. Mohammed Al-Hussaini Al-Sharif**, Chief Representative of the League of Arab States in Washington, visited the University of Houston campus in May to give several talks to students about Middle East affairs. Dr. Al-Sharif's earlier appointments included serving as Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to the Republic of Turkey and to Canada. He earned his doctorate in Political Science at the University of Houston while serving in Houston as the Consul General for Saudi Arabia. Dr. Al-Sharif is one of a number of our political science alumni who have pursued foreign service careers; at least four of our graduate-level alumni have served their countries at the level of ambassador.

Sarah Padalluparti, a UH alumna currently working on her Master of Public Policy at the University of Maryland, is spending this summer in Geneva interning for the United Nations and the World Health Organization.

Alumnus Wins Best Paper Award



Abdullah Aydogan received the prize for Best Student Paper in political science presented at the 2014 Southwest Social Science Annual Meeting. The paper, "Constitutional Design and Military Intervention in Domestic Politics", is taken from his dissertation on the same topic. Abdullah graduated in May, and now holds a post-doc position at Rice University. The picture shows him (left) with Dr. **Juan Carlos Huerta**, a UH PhD who was serving as president of the Political Science section of the Southwest Social Science Association. Alumnus **Joe Stewart**, now at Clemson University, was also in the audience for this presentation.

Conferences Bring Scholars to UH

In February UH Political Science hosted two conferences that brought together regional and national scholars for research presentations and exchanges. UH graduate students had opportunities to get to know the visiting scholars while presenting their work and helping with the conference arrangements. Political Theorist Associate Professor **Jeff Church** organized this year's meeting of the **Lone Star Political**

Theory conference, which was attended by scholars and graduate students from six Texas universities.

Presidency Scholar Associate Professor **Brandon Rottinghaus** organized a conference on the Unilateral Executive. Fifteen scholars from around the country presented their research on executive-legislative relations. Some of the papers from this

conference will be published in a special issue of *Congress & The Presidency*.

Faculty News

At the end of the spring semester Associate Professor **George Antunes** retired. Dr. Antunes is a dedicated teacher who gave over 41 years of service to UH. During his career, he has taught students from the first year through doctoral level in the Political Science program, with his courses and research focusing on urban politics, public administration and criminal justice. He taught many generations of MPA and MA students in the first year statistics courses. Dr. Antunes took an early interest in micro-computers, and he helped to establish the Political Science department's computer lab.

This spring several UH faculty members served as panel organizers for sections at regional conferences. **Jeffrey Church** organized political theory panels at the Southern Political Science meetings. At the Midwest Political Science Association meetings **Brandon Rottinghaus** organized presidency panels and **Scott Clifford** organized political psychology panels.

Congratulations to Dr. Jeronimo Cortina, who was recently promoted to associate professor with tenure, effective fall 2015

Congratulations to Assistant Professor **Justin Kirkland** and **Jonathan Slapin**, winners of the 2015 Leon Weaver Award for best conference paper presented in the Representation and Electoral Systems Section of the 2014 American Political Science Association Meetings. The paper, "Ideological and Strategic Party Disloyalty in the U.S. Congress," was described by the award committee as "an exceptionally well-executed paper".

Associate Professor **Jason Casellas** has been appointed to the Development Committee for the AP US Government and Politics Program. This committee advises on content for AP courses taught nationwide.



Congratulations to Assistant Professor **Justin Kirkland** (above) winner of a Provost's Award for Teaching Excellence! Dr. Kirkland was recognized for his excellence in teaching and mentoring in a wide range of courses, from first year Core courses through upper level graduate seminars. In the past two years he has run a summer preparation program for grad-school bound seniors; this has helped multiple students win scholarships and get into top graduate programs. In summer 2015 he is again leading the program, which helps students identify programs that are good fits with their goals, and works with them as they compile strong application portfolios.

Professor Carp Publishes U.S. District Court Database

When Professor Bob Carp started studying judicial politics in the 1970s, he quickly realized that there were no systematic sources of information about federal district court decisions. He determined to fill this gap by making his own database of court decisions; he had no idea that collecting and updating this data would become a decades' long endeavor. In the 1990s he pushed ahead with the work with the help of Kenneth Manning (then a University of Houston graduate student, now a professor of political science at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst.) The two have worked together ever since to update and extend the collection. It now covers more than 112,000 U.S. district court decisions that spans the decades from 1932 to 2012. Within the next few months Professors Carp and Manning are going to deposit the entire database with ICPSR and make it publicly available. Their aim is to advance the study of judicial politics by making this unique data set easily available to other scholars.

To date, publications utilizing this database data have included two university press books, two major textbooks, five doctoral dissertations, and at least 32 peer-reviewed articles in professional academic journals.

Doctoral Students Graduate



December Graduation: Associate Professors **Jason Casellas** and **Jon Slapin** (ends), and graduates **Chris Akujuobi**, **Alper Bulut** and **Burcu Gezgor**.



May Graduation: **Abdullah Aydogan** with his advisor Associate Professor **Jon Slapin**. Also earning their doctorates in May were **Halil Bilecen**, **Shellee O'Brien** and **Kwok Wai(Wyman) Wan**.

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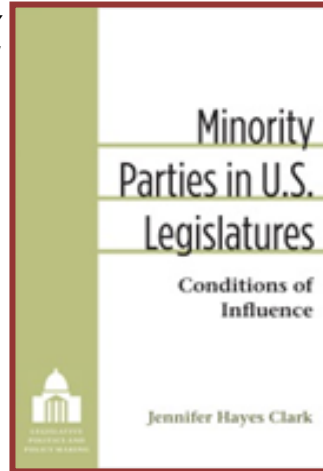
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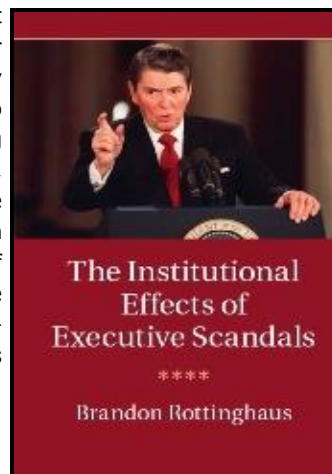
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New Books from Faculty Members

Jennifer Clark, *Minority Parties in U.S. Legislatures: Conditions of Influence*, University of Michigan Press, 2015. This book investigates how and when members of the minority party successfully pursue their interests. The study uses fine-grained data from both the U.S. Congress and state legislatures to answer these questions, paying particular attention to three key points in the legislative process: committee assignments, bill co-sponsorship, and roll-call votes. This examination shows that minority party members are not systematically excluded throughout the policymaking process, but some conditions may enhance their impact. Legislators from minority parties have more capacity to shape legislative decision-making when party polarization is low, when institutional prerogatives are broadly dispersed rather than centralized, and when staff resources are limited. Under these conditions, bipartisanship bill co-sponsorship and voting coalitions are also more prevalent.



Brandon Rottinghaus, *The Institutional Effects of Executive Scandals*, Cambridge University Press, 2015. This book examines the effects of scandals on political polarization, governance, and most importantly democratic accountability: beyond the temporary headlines, what are their lasting effects? Individual scandals such as Watergate, Iran-Contra, Lewinsky, or Bridgegate persist in the public memory and as the isolated subjects of academic study. This book sheds light on systematic effects of executive indiscretion or malfeasance, and proposes a common intellectual framework for understanding their nature and political effects. It investigates the dynamics of the duration of scandals, the way they affect presidents and governors' capacity to govern, and the strategic choices executives make in confronting scandal at both the state and national levels. Because scandals seem to be a perennial feature of contemporary politics, the book's findings are highly pertinent for explaining the operation of American politics.



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