



Highlights from PGH

- In February the UH Political Science department co-hosted the 12th Annual State Politics Convention, bringing together over 140 scholars from all over the United States.
- In Fall 2011 138 Political Science Majors were recognized on the Dean's List for excellence in academics.

Save the Date! PoliSci Alumni Event

"The Future of Texas
Politics"
Thursday April 26, 2012
7 pm
UH Alumni Center

(more details on back page)

Contents

Internships Worldwide	2
Diplomat in Residence	2
Faculty News	3
Graduate Student Focus	3
Research That Matters	4
Stay in touch!	4

Letter from the Chair

Among the personal rewards of becoming chair of the Department of Political Science are the new opportunities I have to meet with our alumni, and to find out more about how our former majors and minors have answered the important question: "What do people do with degrees in political science?" Here are two unsystematic observations based on my conversations so far.

First, while many political science majors go to law school, with or without a law

degree their paths diverge widely. Some go to law firms and elected and unelected positions in government service; many others head to non-profits, healthcare, business and the arts. The analytic and writing skills students learn in our courses are useful in many fields!

Second, I have been delighted to discover that our PhD-holders are now teaching new generations of students at universities and colleges in at least 19 U.S. states and on 4 continents.



I look forward to meeting with many more alumni in coming months, and to introducing you and your inspiring stories to our current undergraduates.

—Susan Scarrow
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Guest Speakers Expand Horizons

UH Alumnus **Professor Philip Zelikow** visited campus this past November to give a talk to undergraduates on his latest book on U.S. foreign policy, "The Twilight War", and to meet with undergraduates who are interested in pursuing foreign policy careers. Zelikow, a political science minor at UH and a graduate of the UH Law Center, is currently the White Burkett Miller Professor of History at the University of Virginia. His public service accomplishments include serving as a Foreign Service Officer, as a member of the National Security Council

under President George H. W. Bush, and as executive director of the "9/11 Commission." During his visit Professor Zelikow also met for lunch with students interested in pursuing foreign policy careers. This visit was made possible by donations to the Political Science Enrichment Fund, a fund that supports special activities outside normal teaching budgets.

This year UH students are also enjoying the chance to hear distinguished scholars address fundamental political questions in talks on

"Conservatism and Progressivism in America." This series, sponsored by the *Phronesis* program and organized by **Assistant Professor Jeffrey Church**, aims to expose UH students to some of the leading participants in debates on current and historical questions in American political thought. Speakers at these well-attended lectures included **Professor Tom Spragens** (Duke University), **Professor Patrick Deneen** (Georgetown University), and **Dr. William Galston** (Brookings Institution).

Alumni Spotlight

In the current campaign season watch for media sightings of UH alumnus **Michael Dimock** being interviewed about voting in the primaries and about voters' perceptions of the presidential candidates. Dimock, who holds a BA in political science from UH and a PhD in political science from the University of California-San Diego, is now associate director for research at the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. Here is what he says about his experiences at UH:

"My experience in the political science program at the University of Houston both kickstarted my career in public opinion research and political analysis and provided the foundational resources to be successful. The supportive faculty provided me with the kind of personal feedback and guidance that allowed me to develop my own interests and skills. The program gave me not only an academic training in the field, but provided opportunities for hands-on experience and, most importantly of all, taught me to write and communicate effectively, which has been the most valuable resource for my overall career development.

"Looking back, one of the features now most appreciate was the relatively small class sizes, and the accessibility and engagement of the faculty with a doors-open policy. This was something I took for granted at the time, but in the years since, as I have talked with people who went to school at other large public institutions, I have realized is one of the exceptional features of the UH program."

Learning by Doing: Public Affairs Interns

Each semester scores of political science majors and minors pursue internships in public agencies and with public officials, augmenting their classroom studies with real world experiences on the front lines of public affairs.

In 2011, 54 UH students participated in the Civic Houston internship Program (CHIP), coordinated by Renée Cross, Associate Director of the Hobby Center for Public Policy. This spring, 25 UH students are participating in the offices of elected officials, with political consultants, and with non-profit organizations in the Houston area such as the Coalition for the Homeless. In addition to their work for these agencies, students prepare research papers that integrate their on-the-job experiences with their

classroom work.

Beyond the local arena, UH political science students are pursuing work with a national or international focus. In summer 2011 **Stephanie Ruiz** worked in the American Embassy in Rome, Italy under a State Department internship program. **Audris Ponce** completed an internship with the *New York Times* during the winter break. **Rebecca Weber** will complete a State Department internship in Washington, D.C this coming May.

Internships give UH students opportunities to discover their interests, to think about career choices, and to make connections that can serve as professional stepping stones.

Walk into a Houston-area public office today and you may well find UH Political Science alumni and former interns, including **Civil District Court Judge Al Bennett, State Representative Ana Hernandez, State Representative Armando Walle, Darren Hall** (Mayor Annise Parker's deputy chief of staff), **Debra Gonzales** (legislative director for Senator Mario Gallegos), **Alex Obregon** (special assistant to City Controller Ron Green), council aides **Tracy Elsner** (Council Member Ellen Cohen), **Jeanette De Los Santos** (Council Member James Rodriguez) and **Melissa Arredondo** (Council Member Stephen Costello).

Our Diplomat-in-Residence

Career Foreign Service Officer **Donna Blair** is currently serving her second year as the University of Houston's Diplomat-in-Residence. Under this program, senior State Department employees spend time in residence at a university during a break between their overseas postings, recruiting students for the State Department's internship programs, and helping students who are preparing for the Foreign Service Exam.

Ms. Blair, a native of New Orleans, came to the University of Houston after multiple postings in Africa,

Mexico, Venezuela, Argentina and elsewhere. Ms. Blair serves as a resource on the UH campus for students and faculty who have questions about US foreign policy.

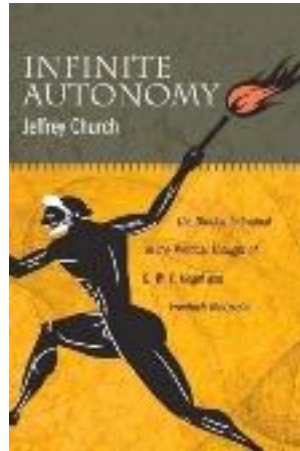
The University of Houston is one of only 16 U.S. universities chosen to host a Diplomat-in-Residence. Through its participation in this program, UH offers students a leg up on international and foreign policy careers.



Faculty News and Noteworthy

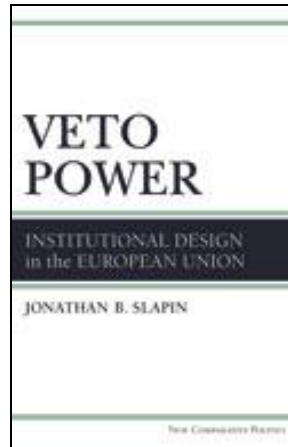
In Presidential election years political science faculty are in particularly high demand as commentators for local, national and international media. Some of our most visible pundits in recent months included **Eduardo Aléman, Jeremy Bailey, Jeronimo Cortina, Jim Granato, Richard Murray** and **Brandon Rottinghaus**. Listen and look for them in the news throughout the upcoming election season!

Assistant Professor Jennifer Clark was awarded a grant from the Dirksen Center for Congressional Studies for her research project on "The Difference Women Make: How Gender Shapes Agenda-Setting



and Policy Success in the Contemporary Congress."

Assistant Professor Jeffrey Church has just published *Infinite Autonomy: The Divided Individual in the Political Thought of G.W.F. Hegel and Friedrich Nietzsche*



(Pennsylvania State University Press). In *Infinite Autonomy*, Jeffrey Church draws on the thinking of both Hegel and Nietzsche to assess the modern Western defense of individuality, and to consider whether we were right to reject the ancient

model that places community above the individual.

Assistant Professor Jonathan Slapin recently published *Veto Power: Institutional Design and the European Union* (University of Michigan Press). This timely book examines the institutional architecture of the European Union. It explains how the use of vetoes - and veto threats - in European Union treaty negotiations distinguishes the EU from other international organizations in which exit and expulsion threats are more important.

Graduate Research: Timely Topics

In political science, most good dissertations have a real world answer to the "so what?" question, but topics sometimes become even more timely than expected. Here are a few examples from dissertations that our advanced graduate students are working on this spring:

Michelle Belco's research examines the ongoing battle between the president and Congress, especially with regards to Congress' response to presidential unilateral orders. For example, President Obama recently vowed to use such unilateral orders to help fix the economy if Congress won't act on his proposals.

Michelle's research investigates how (or if) Congress responds to such unilateral presidential action.

George Hawley's dissertation has election-year relevance, showing how patterns of migration are re-shaping political geography by reinforcing distinctions between counties that vote predominantly Republican or predominantly Democrat. This change in the political landscape contributes to growing political polarization, as this dissertation demonstrates. It shows that Americans residing in uncompetitive counties are more ideological, more firmly attached to their parties, and more likely to hold polarized views on

political candidates.

Marwa Shalaby is writing a dissertation on public opinion and democracy in the Arab world, a topic she began researching almost a year before the so-called "Arab Spring" brought this topic in the headlines. Her dissertation challenges the conventional wisdom on the roots of the democracy deficit in the region. The research combines rigorous data analysis with extensive fieldwork, and develops a theoretical framework that explains the determinants of mass democratic norms and behaviors in seven Middle Eastern countries.

UH Alumnus in the News: Height Matters in Politics

Greg Murray (UH Political Science PhD 2003, now Assistant Professor at Texas Tech University) made a splash in the national media in the fall 2011 pre-primary election season with his article in *Social Science Quarterly* on the strong positive relation between physical stature and perceptions of political leadership.

This issue of the journal was the last to be edited by **Professor Robert Lineberry**, who just completed 18 years as editor of this respected interdisciplinary journal.

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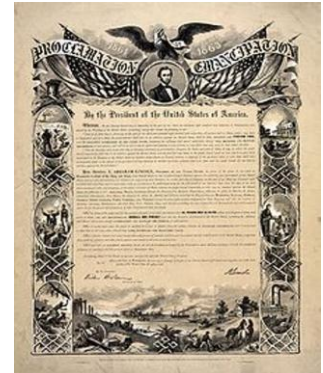
Research that Matters:

Presidential Proclamations Project

Are Presidents more likely to issue proclamations in election years? Citizens can now answer this and other questions using the online database created by **Associate Professors Brandon Rottinghaus and Jeremy D. Bailey**. Their Presidential Proclamations Project at the University of Houston offers an online searchable resource for presidential proclamations, which are a unilateral executive tool similar to executive orders. This is the most complete existing record of presidential proclamations (approximately 11,000). The website also hosts many presidential documents from the terms of President George Washington through President George W. Bush.

Because of their expertise in this area, many interest

groups, non-profit groups and service organizations have called on Professors Bailey and Rottinghaus for advice in navigating the process of getting a proclamation, including the Mathematics, Science Achievement Organization, the National Forum on Information Literacy (who obtained a presidential proclamation), the U.S. Army Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps, and the National Barbeque Cup Foundation. Other groups have also sought their counsel on matters related to presidential proclamations, including the United States Department of Justice, the Florida Department of Revenue, the National Archives and Records Administration, The Almanac of Theodore Roosevelt, and several law firms.



A 19th Century Copy of *The Emancipation Proclamation*

Professor Rottinghaus and UH graduate student **Michelle Belco** have published an article on Presidential Proclamations in *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, and they are working on several other publications.

You can link to this database and find related documents on the UH Political Science web page.

Stay in Touch with UH Political Science

Here are several ways to stay in touch:

***Come to an on-campus Alumni Event on Thursday, April 26,** a forum on **"The Future of Texas Politics"** featuring UH alumna **Rep. Beverley Wooley (Texas State Legislature)** and UH **Prof. Richard Murray**. More details will be sent by e-mail. If you aren't already on our e-mail list and would like to receive information

about this and other events, please send your information to PoliticalScience@UH.edu, or sign up on our Facebook page.

Share an issue of *UH PoliSciNow! This new newsletter only reaches a fraction of the UH Political Science alumni. Send an e-mail with a link to this newsletter to friends and fellow alumni or post a link to it on your Facebook page.

***Support our students.** Contributions from alumni, faculty and friends support visiting speakers, student conference travel, and scholarship funds. We deeply appreciate those who support our students in this way! You can make an on-line donation to the Political Science Excellence Fund or to our Graduate Scholarship fund, or find out about other ways to give, under the "Giving" tab on our web site: www.polsci.uh.edu.