The Department of Political Science

ALUMNI NEWSWIRE

2026



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Discourse in Democracy

Faculty and students tackle today's biggest debates

Internships

Our students head to the DC and Austin

Alumni Report

Check in with some of our distinguished graduates

TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY

Department of Political Science

IT'S A GREAT DAY TO BE A BOBCAT!

The Department of Political Science at Texas State University is committed to quality teaching and learning, research and scholarship, public service, and responsible citizenship. Building upon the bodies of knowledge in the disciplines of political science, public administration and legal studies, the department seeks to prepare students to read and think critically about the enduring questions of political life, to fulfill their responsibilities as citizens, to engage in community service, and to excel in their professional lives.



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ALUMNI NEWSWIRE

Annual magazine for the Texas State Political Science program.

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INTERNSHIPS

CHANCELLOR'S US CAPITOL INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

"Imagine walking the halls of Congress, sitting in on bill hearings, meeting with constituents on an important issue, or helping prepare your congressman for an upcoming meeting. That's some of what our Chancellor's interns have experienced representing Texas State in Washington, D.C. It's been the opportunity of a lifetime for many students who now see working in D.C. as part of their future." - **Dr. Thomas McMahan**, coordinator

The Chancellor's U.S. Capitol Internship Program is a new system-wide initiative that provides financial support for TXST students seeking the unique opportunity to serve as congressional and public policy interns in Washington, D.C. Over the course of their internships, interns can engage with and develop a greater understanding of the policymaking and legislative processes while gaining invaluable professional skills, practical government work experience, and a more robust professional network.









Pictured (clockwise): Eduardo Almanza, Miguel Perez, Trinity Sutherland, Alexandra Johannigman

This is the second class of Chancellor's scholars to represent Texas State in Washington, D.C. The following students served during the spring 2026 semester.

"My experience as a DC Chancellor Scholar was remarkable—it provided me with the opportunity to live in our nation's capital while interning for our federal government. Through this congressional experience, I got to expand my knowledge on the legislative and policymaking process, network with interns from all over the nation, and develop technical skills that will serve me well in my professional career. It taught me the importance of maintaining relationships, being detail-oriented, and upholding professionalism in a demanding work environment. I can confidently say that the Chancellor's Program reinforced my passion for law and service while providing a great foundation for my future education in law school." -**Eduardo Almanza** – Representative Henry Cuellar (TX)

"The Chancellor's DC Internship Program was one of the most rewarding experiences of my academic career. During my internship on Capitol Hill, I gained a better understanding of Congress, the legislative process, and public service. I especially enjoyed learning more about defense and national security through conversations with congressional staff and professionals from different offices and committees. Those experiences broadened my understanding of federal policy and strengthened my interest in a career in public service. I left the program with valuable connections, new perspectives, and skills that will benefit me throughout my career." -**Miguel Perez** – Representative Dan Crenshaw (TX)

"I completed an internship with Congressman Greg Casar's DC office. The city's culture and accessibility are incredible, and I am glad I made time to explore its different neighborhoods. The most valuable skill I learned during this internship was how to write concise and consistent legislative correspondence. Every day, constituents from across Texas District 35 write to or call the office with questions and concerns, and office staff draft letters in response. The letters are then sent through a chain from legislative aides to the legislative director, then to the director of communications, and finally to the Congressman. The most memorable experience of this internship was the breakfast I shared with the Congressman and his family. It felt wonderful to converse with someone I have admired for years and to create a meaningful connection." -**Alexandra Johannigman** – Representative Greg Casar (TX)

"My overall experience in the Chancellor's D.C. Internship program was stellar! I was able to not only gain firsthand experience in federal government operations and the legislative process, but also able to explore all of what D.C. has to offer. My semester was so well-rounded with personal and professional growth, and I have been missing my time in D.C. since I left!" -**Trinity Sutherland** - Representative Jimmy Gomez (CA)

OPEN HORIZON INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

"What has been most rewarding is seeing students grow in confidence and professionalism while serving in offices that directly shape national policy. The experience helps them connect classroom learning to real-world governance, exposes them to diverse perspectives, and often inspires a lifelong commitment to public service. Several participants have already leveraged their internships to expand their professional opportunities, demonstrating the lasting impact of immersive experiential learning in our nation's capital. By reducing financial barriers and creating access to these high-impact experiences, the program is helping prepare the next generation of public servants, policymakers, and community leaders."- **Dr. Helen Lowman**, coordinator

The CRPPT Washington, DC, Internship Scholarship Program is designed to ensure that talented Texas State students—particularly those who are first-generation and Pell-eligible—can access the transformative public service opportunities that might otherwise be financially out of reach. The program is made possible through the generous support of private philanthropic partners, including family foundations and individual donors who believe in expanding opportunities for students interested in public service and civic leadership. Their investments help to cover the significant costs associated with living and working in Washington, allowing selected students to pursue internships based on their interests and abilities rather than their financial circumstances.

Through placements in congressional offices, the CRPPT Program enables students to gain firsthand experience with the policymaking process, develop professional networks, and build the skills needed for careers in government, nonprofit leadership, and public affairs.

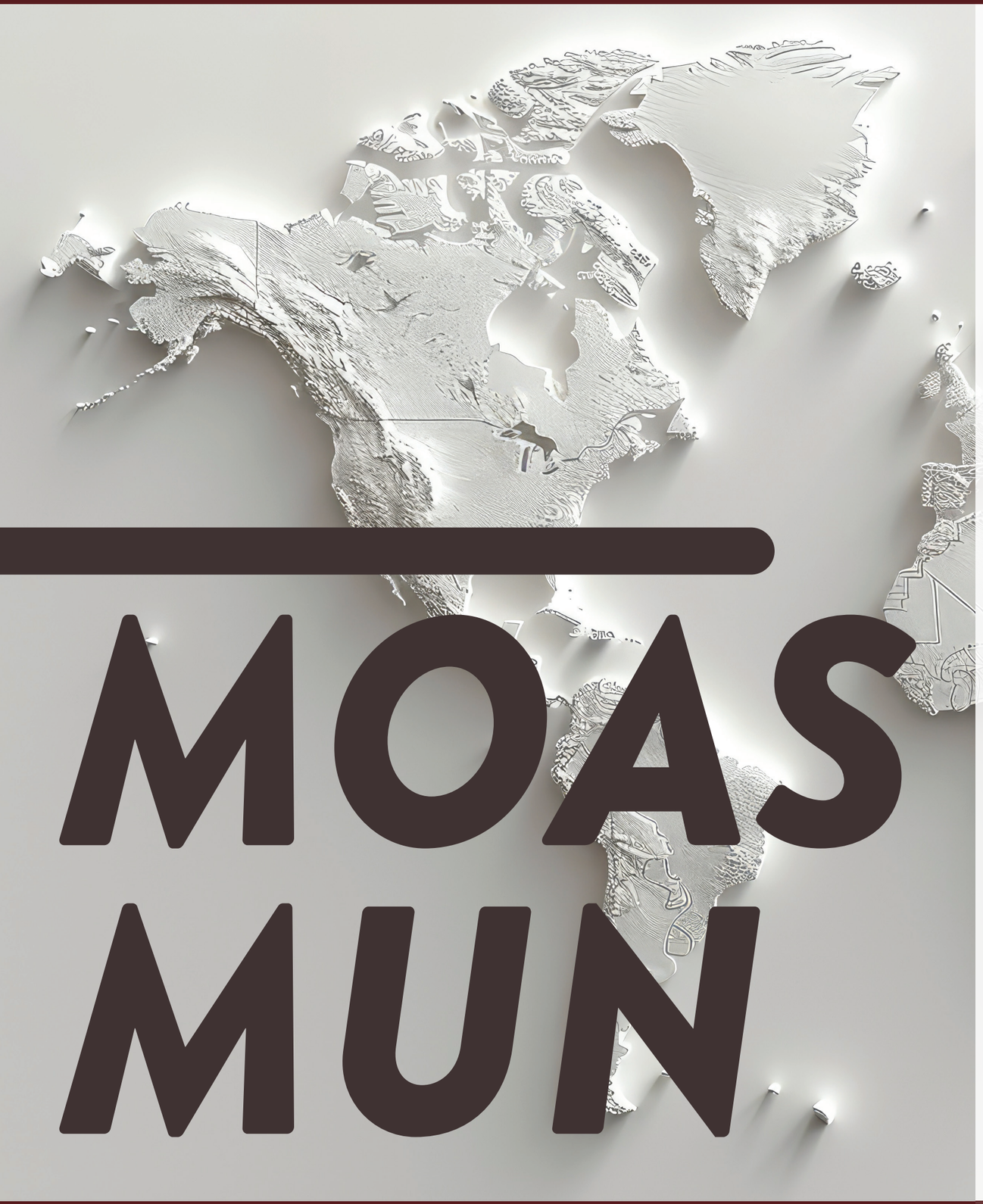


Dr. Helen Lowman



Nahimana Nadege

"My experience in the Open Horizon program and as a congressional intern was nothing short of amazing and inspiring. Through this opportunity, I was able to get a closer look at the inner workings of the US legislative system while exploring a career path I had not considered before. Along with being an enriching academic experience, this opportunity also served as a great networking opportunity, which allowed me to explore and build connections across Capitol Hill. As I look to the future, I feel more confident in the career path that I have chosen, and I have this opportunity to thank all those who made this opportunity possible!" -**Nahimana Nadege**



MOAS MUN

ESMOAS 2025

The Model Organization of American States (MOAS) is an academic group through which students learn how the Organization of American States operates by competing in debate competitions that seek to enhance the leadership qualities and problem-solving skills of its members. In MOAS, students study the distinct economic, political, and security issues facing the Americas today. MOAS is designed around members' participation in the Eugene Scassa Mock Organization of American States (ESMOAS) competition, held each November. In this ESMOAS competition, students are assigned to represent a country in a mock session of the Organization of American States, which is comprised of Western Hemisphere nations.

In such competitions, students are expected to represent their assigned nation's interests and display diplomatic proficiency. Using parliamentary procedure, students must argue for and/or against resolutions that are developed by competitors in mock OAS sessions. Thus, to do well, students must learn about the politics of the Western Hemisphere (especially that of Latin America), develop effective diplomatic techniques, and be able to accurately understand and apply parliamentary procedures. By participating, students are able to conduct research on topics presented at competitions, become better public speakers, and develop leadership skills for their future.

Texas State's MOAS program has had a long history of success. This legacy was affirmed when TXST tudents participated in the 29h Annual Eugene Scassa Mock Organization of American States (ESMOAS) competition at the University of St. Thomas in Fall of 2025. At the competition, approximately 140 students attended to represent schools throughout the region, including the University of Texas, Baylor University, Angelo State University, St. Mary's University, and the National Autonomous University of Mexico. Texas State's MOAS program represented the nations of Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras.

Debates covered a host of topics ranging from improving access to healthcare to mitigating gender-based violence. Through their participation, TX ST students were able to practice valuable skills for their futures. Discussing her overall experience, senior political science major Sofia Hernandez noted, "As the MOAS president and chairperson for the Budget Committee, it was a wonderful experience to see the fruits of TXST students' labor from class and witness their growth in speech and debate throughout the competition. I am very proud to have seen their speaking skills and confidence grow throughout the semester, and I look forward to seeing how this program continues to succeed with all of the dedicated students involved!"



While this year's ESMOAS competition was helpful in enhancing the abilities and experiences of students, they also won numerous awards. The highlights of the awards granted to the Texas State MOAS members are as follows: Team El Salvador won Outstanding Delegation, the first-place overall team award at the Summit of Americas competition, and Team Honduras won Distinguished Delegation, which constitutes the 2nd-place overall team award. In addition, Carson Raatz won the Outstanding Ambassador Award, an honor that serves as the 1st-place overall individual award, with Travis Buchanan taking home the Recognized Ambassador Award, the 3rd-place overall individual award.



TXST STUDENT HONORS & AWARDS:

TEAM EL SALVADOR
Outstanding Delegation

TEAM HONDURAS
Distinguished Delegation

TEAM MEXICO
Distinguished Position Paper

CARSON RAATZ
Outstanding Ambassador
Recognized Delegate
Recognized Crisis Speech

TRAVIS BUCHANAN
Recognized Ambassador

EMMANUEL BRISENO-HERNANDEZ
Distinguished Resolution (2nd Place in Committee), Executive Secretariat for Integral Development

EDDIE ALMANZA
Recognized Delegate (3rd Place in Committee), Secretariat for Access to Rights and Equity

GABE MARQUEZ
Chair of the Executive Secretariat for Integral Development

SOFIA HERNANDEZ
Chair of the Budgetary Committee

ALLI MCCALLA
Rapporteur of the Executive Secretariat for Integral Development

LILY ALVAREZ
Rapporteur of the Budgetary Committee

LUCY BEATY
Agenda Topic Award, General Committee

ALONDRA AYALA
Recognized Resolution, Executive Secretariat for Integral Development
Outstanding Delegate, Executive Secretariat for Integral Development

BOHDI ROSEN
Distinguished Delegate, Executive Secretariat for Integral Development

SRMUN 2025

The Model United Nations (MUN) is a student debate organization that focuses on enhancing the leadership qualities of its members. Students that participate in the MUN compete annually at the Southern Regional Model United Nations (SRMUN) conference in Charlotte, NC. During such competitions, students are expected to represent their assigned nation's interests and display diplomatic proficiency. Students must conduct in-depth research on topics presented at the competitions, a process by which members are able to become better public speakers and develop various team and leadership skills.

Using parliamentary procedure, competing students argue for and against resolutions that are developed by other students in mock United Nations' sessions. To do well, students and their competitors must familiarize themselves with International Relations (IR) theory, investigate contemporary global issues, utilize effective diplomatic techniques, and understand the importance of respecting parliamentary processes.

The Model United Nations (MUN) is an academic organization through which students learn how the United Nations operates by competing in student debate competitions, such as the Harvard National Model United Nations. In MUN, students study parliamentary debate, diplomacy, and current global issues.

At this year's SRMUN competition, students debated complex global issues ranging from the role of artificial intelligence in global cybercrime to tackling public debt issues among member states. Approximately 600 students, comprising 75 delegations from 45 universities, competed in the 2026 SRMUN competition. Participating universities included the University of Colorado, Auburn University, Clemson University, Georgia Tech, and the University of Central Florida among others. Texas State's own MUN members were assigned to represent the following countries: the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Nigeria, Belgium, Israel, and the United States (USA).

Though Texas State has had a long history of success at SRMUN, with at least one delegation placing in the top three for eight competitions in a row, the group was unable to come away with a top delegation award in a notably fierce competition. Still, Texas State students performed extremely well at SRMUN, as they have in previous years.

TXST STUDENT HONORS & AWARDS:

SOFIA HERNANDEZ
Best Position Paper, International Court of Justice

ZACK ESTRADA
Rapporteur, International Criminal Police Organization





DISCOURSE IN DEMOCRACY

CONSTITUTION DAY

Constitution Day, alternatively known as Citizenship Day, is an American federal observance that simultaneously commemorates the signing of the United States Constitution in 1787 and recognizes those who have become United States citizens by coming of age or through naturalization. Over 270 students, staff, and faculty attended Discourse in Democracy's annual Constitution Day Lecture, a fall 2025 event made possible by a generous grant from the Jack Miller Center for Teaching America's Founding Principles and History.

This year's speaker, Dr. Jeremy D. Bailey, professor of humanities at the Hamilton School of Classical and Civic Education at the University of Florida, presented a lecture on "Native Nations and Jefferson's Constitution of 1804." The lecture, which was open to the entire campus community, explored America's interactions with native nations following the Louisiana Purchase. It discussed Jefferson's proposed legislation, conflicts between settlers and native inhabitants, and property law.





The next day, Dr. Bailey hosted an invitation-only seminar for over 30 students and faculty members that addressed the complicated matter of "Jefferson and Slavery" by exploring letters exchanged between Thomas Jefferson and Edward Coles regarding the emancipation of slaves in Virginia. Isabel Duarte, a graduate student in political science who attended the seminar, said, "It taught me a lot about Jefferson's anti-slavery sentiments. Knowing he himself owned slaves, this was really surprising. It was amazing to meet Dr. Bailey and have engaging discussions with other students and professors."

Dr. Bailey's published works include *Thomas Jefferson and the Executive Power* (Cambridge University Press), *James Madison and Constitutional Imperfection* (Cambridge University Press), and *The Idea of Presidential Representation* (University of Kansas Press). His articles have appeared in a wide variety of journals including the *American Political Science Review*, *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, and *History of Political Thought*. In addition to his work as a published author, Dr. Bailey served as editor of *American Political Thought* from 2019 to 2023.





FACULTY PANEL

In fall 2025, the Department of Political Science and Discourse in Democracy also sponsored a faculty panel titled "Between Conflict & Cooperation: World Politics in 2025." Dr. Alex Kroeger moderated this panel of international relations (IR) experts, which consisted of Drs. Tom Doyle, Ed Mihalkanin, Franziska Newell, and Ionuț Popescu. The event was part of the department's ongoing effort to foster public dialogue on global affairs and encourage students to engage critically with the forces shaping international politics. The panel brought together over sixty students, faculty, and staff to explore how global conflicts, alliances, and shifting power structures are shaping the current international landscape. Dr. Kroeger opened the event with an acknowledgment that we live in turbulent times, noting simultaneously that the challenging environment brings with it opportunities for collaboration and cooperation; for diplomacy and collective problem-solving.





- Dr. Doyle focused his discussion on the intersection of state fragility and transnational issues. He highlighted the impact of drug trafficking in Venezuela and the persistent instability of the Israel/Palestine conflict, emphasizing how non-state actors and weak governance can intensify international tensions but also create openings for multilateral cooperation.

- Dr. Mihalkanin examined how environmental and economic pressures are actively reshaping geopolitical relationships among nations. He discussed the particularly destabilizing effects of the climate crisis, resource scarcity, and the ripple effects of US domestic and foreign policies—including tariffs and immigration—on international alliances and global markets.

- Dr. Newell presented a legal and institutional perspective, focusing on the role of international law in conflict zones. She explored how the principles and enforcement mechanisms of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide are being tested in ongoing conflicts such as Israel/Palestine and Russia/Ukraine.

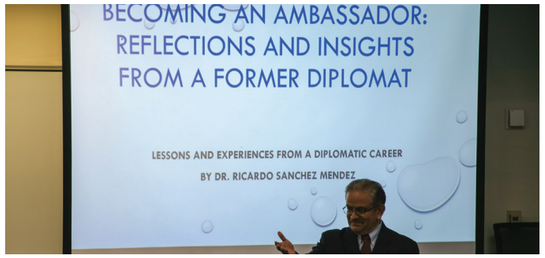
- Dr. Popescu analyzed the evolving strategic role of the United States on the world stage, including its diplomatic posture under President Trump. He discussed Washington's involvement in mediating the Israel/Palestine conflict, the strategic implications of the US–China trade war, and the broader geo-economic competition shaping international order.

AMBASSADORSHIP

The final event of fall 2025 for Discourse in Democracy, cosponsored with Pi Sigma Alpha, was a talk by Dr. Ricardo Sanchez-Mendez titled "Becoming an Ambassador: Reflections and Insights from a Former Diplomat." Dr. Sanchez-Mendez had served in the Mexican Foreign Service for 35 years prior to teaching, holding posts in Korea, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Cuba, and the Philippines, as well as in US consulates located in El Paso, Omaha, and Austin. He retired with the rank of minister and is the author of a forthcoming book, *The Mexican Foreign Service in the 21st Century*.

Dr. Sanchez-Mendez's presentation centered on the topics of diplomacy, ambassadorship, patriotism, and professionalism. He discussed the critical characteristics of a successful diplomat, which include an interest in foreign relations, the ability to cultivate cross-cultural relationships, and the capacity to adapt to diverse international environments. Dr. Sanchez then shared some information about the process to become an ambassador. He also spoke in detail of his own career as a diplomat, mentioning the impact terrorist attacks in Jakarta, natural disasters, influenza, and poverty had on his experiences.

Student questions ranged in topic from those personal challenges Dr. Sanchez-Mendez had overcome to Mexican foreign relations. One student remarked, "It was awesome to hear from such a distinguished professional on this topic! I felt encouraged and empowered to pursue a similar career path."



"GOVERNMENT BY THE UNELECTED"

Kicking off the spring 2026 semester, 80 students, faculty, and staff attended a lecture delivered by Dr. R. J. Pestritto, jointly sponsored by Pi Sigma Alpha, the Tocqueville Forum, and Discourse in Democracy. Entitled "Government by the Unelected," the lecture explored the developments of the Progressive Era and New Deal, emphasizing their contributions to the growth of American bureaucracy.

Dr. Pestritto is the Charles and Lucia Shipley Chair in the American Constitution at Hillsdale College. His books include *America Transformed: The Rise and Legacy of American Progressivism* (2021), *Woodrow Wilson and the Roots of Modern Liberalism* (2005), and *Government by the Unelected* (2025).



With references to the Declaration of Independence and US Constitution, Dr. Pestritto argued that overreliance on a bureaucracy, or any "unelected class," is a threat to American democracy. He also explored recent court cases related to the administrative state. Student questions following the lecture spanned from the legislature's power of the purse to the perception of American stability and the role of the filibuster in the Senate. One student in attendance said, "The lecture wasn't anything I'd ever heard of or considered before. It was an excellent opportunity to expand my academic horizons outside of the classroom."

END OF NEW START AGREEMENT

For its second spring 2026 event, Discourse in Democracy sponsored a lecture by Dr. Tom Doyle on "The Expiration of the New START Agreement: From Nuclear Arms Control to Competitive Risk-Taking in the Global Nuclear Order." Dr. Doyle is a professor in the Department of Political Science, and around 70 students, faculty, and staff attended his presentation. Dr. Doyle opened by emphasizing that the original motivations for arms control included the devastating experiences of World War II, the ever-increasing cost of a perpetual arms race, and the widespread effects of extensive nuclear testing conducted throughout the Cold War era. He then noted that this history has repeatedly shown how policies of nuclear deterrence do not necessarily incentivize restraint in arms racing.

Unlike policies of deterrence, Dr. Doyle argues that nuclear arms controls are more practically effective in improving conditions because they make scenarios clear and contractual. They proactively incentivize de-escalation and can serve to build trust between even enemy countries. Yet, the expiration of the New START treaty, according to Dr. Doyle, may indeed be marked by increased efforts for nuclear states to modernize, for non-nuclear states to develop nuclear weapons, and for a return to nuclear testing. In short, he concluded that the end of New START makes "future restraint via treaty very unlikely."



Dr. Doyle's interactive presentation included the use of NukeMap to model what would happen if there were to be nuclear attacks on San Antonio, TX. He also incorporated videos exploring the history of nuclear testing across the globe and the most likely scenario for Russian/American nuclear conflict. Discussion questions centered around the locations used for nuclear testing, the role of trust in nuclear arms control, the existence of laws/regulations related to nuclear arms testing, and the US–Iran conflict.

COUNTERING TERRORISM

At its final sponsored event for spring 2026, Discourse in Democracy hosted Mr. Robert W. Starnes for a presentation entitled "A Journey from Texas State to Countering Terrorism." Around 130 faculty, staff, and students attended to hear Mr. Starnes discuss his own academic and professional journey, beginning with his experience as a student at Texas State University (then known as Southwest Texas State University).



A three-time published author and veteran security professional with over 34 years of experience in international diplomacy, law enforcement, and counterterrorism, Mr. Starnes's career involved protecting various US diplomats and global leaders, leading high-risk security operations, and disrupting terrorist threats worldwide. An engaging storyteller, he shared a multitude of stories from throughout his career, highlighting different operations in South America that contributed to overall national security. Student questions concerned academic requirements for the career path, risks of the field, and benefits of the work.



AWARDS CEREMONY

On Thursday, April 23, the Department of Political Science held its annual Awards Ceremony for the 2025–2026 school year, where faculty, students, and their families were able to come together at the LBJ Student Center to celebrate the year's accomplishments. Departmental awards and scholarships were presented by Dr. Ken Grasso, department chair; Dr. Vince Bagnulo, the department's associate chair; Dr. Howard Balanoff, professor and co-director of the Texas Certified Public Manager (CPM) Program; and Dr. Michelle Evans, director of the Legal Studies Program. Dr. Mary Brennan, dean of the College of Liberal Arts, distributed College of Liberal Arts Academic Excellence Certificates to juniors and seniors with a GPA of 3.75 or higher.

POLITICAL SCIENCE SCHOLARSHIPS & AWARDS

OUTSTANDING GRADUATE STUDENT

E. REAGAN HAIK

OUTSTANDING PS GRADUATE STUDENT

DYLANN ENGLE

OUTSTANDING UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT

ASHTON HANSEN

THE JAMES H. MCCROCKLIN MEMORIAL POLITICAL SCIENCE SCHOLARSHIP ENDOWMENT

CAMILLA VELAZQUEZ

THE BETTYLEE & DANIEL FARLOW ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

JAKOB SALSGIVER

THE WALTER RICHTER ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP

VALENTINA VERA-GONZALEZ

THE RICHARD B. HENDERSON POLITICAL SCIENCE AWARD

WILLIAM BARRY

THE BARNEY & LINDA KNIGHT ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP FUND

SANIYHA COLEMAN
LEA HARTMAN
FRITZ KOKINDA
MONIQUE PEREZ
LAYLA SALDUA

COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AWARDS

JOSUE M. ALBERTO
GABRIEL V. ALBUQUERQUE DE MELO
JOSE M. ALCALA
EDUARDO ALMANZA
ALONDRA S. AYALA
SALAS WILLIAM D. BARRY
NOELLE E. BECKHAM
EMMA A. BOEGEL
WENDY BORJA SAMUEL Q. BUDNIK
MAYRA E. CASTANEDA
ROCIO A. CASTRO-NINO
AMY C. CHAFFEE
GRAHAM A. CHRISTOPHER
ALEJANDRO CISNEROS
ADRIAN E. CORNEJO
PAUL A. FINKLEA
COLLIN A. FORD
EMILY Y. GARCIA
SOFIA G. GARZA
ARIEL G. GUTHRIE
ASHTON M. HANSEN
JONATHAN D. HEBLER
BENJAMIN O. HORTON
BRAYDEN L. HUTTON
RACHEL C. JACKSON
FELICIA R. JONES
AMELIE JUAREZ
ISABEL G. KENNEY
SHARLENE E. KIEFER
MIKAELA M. KRAM
EDWIN K. KURIA
DRAKE MADDIX
GABRIEL A. MARQUEZ
DERIC J. MARSH
MAYCIE F. METZLER
AVERY B. MILLS
LAYLA C. MOORE
NAHIMANA NADEGE
PETE R. PASCONE
NAIOMI P. PEREZ VALENTIN
ADAM Y. PRICE
KAIYLA L. RODRIGUEZ
JAKOB D. SALSGIVER
KAYLA G. SCHULZE
JOEL T. SCOTT
HALEY M. SMITH
JOSHUA P. STAGGS
NIKO S. TORO
SARAH A. TRAYHAN
SAVANNA R. TREMBACK
KADEN D. TUCKER
MONIKA VARGAS
CAMILA M. VELAZQUEZ
ALYSSA B. WHEELER
CIARA R. WHEELER
MATTHEW G. ZINCK







PI SIGMA ALPHA

INTERNSHIP PANEL

In the spring of 2026, Pi Sigma Alpha and Supporting Women in Political Science (SWIPS) collaborated on the Life on Capitol Hill Q&A Panel, providing a platform for students to learn about internship opportunities in Washington, DC. The panel featured fall 2025 DC interns Mikaela Kram, Adrian Cornejo, and Ethan Gravis, who shared firsthand insights on the value of a Capitol Hill internship.

Representing the Chancellor's US Capitol Program, Kram and Cornejo discussed their experiences working in Washington. Kram had interned with a lobbying group working closely with the Texas State University system, while Cornejo served in the office of Congressman Joaquin Castro. Ethan Gravis received a housing scholarship from the Open Horizon Foundation, a separate internship program through which he was placed as an intern in the office of Congressman Lloyd Doggett.
These panelists outlined eligibility requirements and application materials before discussing how their day-to-day responsibilities looked on Capitol Hill. Intern duties ranged from policy research and attending hearings to constituent communication and conducting Capitol tours—one of which enabled Adrian Cornejo to act as a tour guide for an ambassador from Argentina. While responsibilities varied by office, each panelist emphasized the professional growth and unique experiences the internship provided.

Attending students asked about competitiveness in the application process, how to stand out as an applicant, and safety in Washington, DC. Gravis encouraged applicants to use interviews to showcase their individuality rather than simply restate their résumés. Panelists also advised students to remain grounded, practice self-advocacy, and maintain perspective in a fast-paced political environment. Despite challenges such as a government shutdown and National Guard presence during their term, all three noted they felt safe, emphasizing the commonsense awareness necessary in any major city. The panel concluded with a powerful reminder:



Interns belong in the spaces they earn. Mikaela Kram highlighted the importance of self-respect and confidence, noting that overcoming impostor syndrome was key to fully embracing the opportunity. Overall, the discussion left students encouraged and better prepared to pursue Capitol Hill internships through both the Chancellor's Capitol Program and the Open Horizon Foundation.





INDUCTION CEREMONY

As a fitting end to the spring 2026 semester, the Texas State chapter of Pi Sigma Alpha, a nationwide political science honor society, hosted its annual induction dinner at Palmer's Restaurant Bar & Courtyard. It was a night of celebration to commemorate the academic achievement and perseverance of its members. President Sarah Trayhan and faculty sponsor Dr. Ezekiel Loseke inducted the following new members: Amru Fadl, Amelie Juarez, Elisabeth Faidi, Elena Cavo, Hannah Kriese, Hillary Ruedas, Jayla Palmer, Kyle Sanger, Victoria Vicuna, and Abena Amankwa. President Sarah Trayhan exclaimed afterward, "I am so happy to honor all the new members of Pi Sigma Alpha!" Dr. Loseke added that "it was wonderful to see so many young scholars interested in political science."

Chapter Rho Eta of Pi Sigma Alpha is the local chapter of TXST. 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 its members get jobs, internships, and experience before and after college. Those interested in learning more about the Rho Eta Chapter of Pi Sigma Alpha should contact President Sarah Trayhan at hvc13@txstate.edu.

Founded in 1920, Pi Sigma Alpha is the national honors society for political science. The Texas State chapter, Rho Eta, was established in 1988 and over the last thirty years has hosted a variety of lectures and community-service projects.

SWIPS

SUPPORTING WOMEN IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

WHAT IS SWIPS?

"SWIPS aims to build community and provide useful networking opportunities. The organization's leadership always aims for a variety of social and more educational topics and events. It's really a wonderful mix!"
—**Dr. Franziska Newell,** faculty cosponsor

Supporting Women in Political Science (SWIPS) is a nonpartisan women's organization at Texas State University. This professional education and development organization is dedicated to helping political science majors and other students explore the various aspects of political science, enabling them to pursue their professional and academic interests. Regular meetings provide opportunities to draw attention to various internships and scholarships and for students to discuss department events as well as complex issues related to politics and policy.

Officers for the 2026 fall semester are as follows: Ihechi Diribe, president; Benedict Kazadi, vice president; Favour Madojutimi, secretary; and Ashlee Chrisman, senior advisor. Additional officer roles for the fall are still open. For more information on how to join or how to apply to become an officer, contact President Ihechi Diribe at tbd50@txstate.edu. This year, Supporting Women in Political Science (SWIPS) kicked off the fall 2025 semester strong with a meeting on "Ethical Ways to Use AI." Participants discussed the development of artificial intelligence, along with its potential applications, political impact, and relevant legislation. Members also discussed the importance of honing individual critical thinking skills and the possibility that AI software use may be more ethical as an organizational tool rather than for generative or creative purposes.

But relevant policy discussions are far from the only thing SWIPS has to offer.

In addition to encouraging the exploration of complex topics, civic engagement is also a central concern for SWIPS. In one particular meeting on the subject, SWIPS members were encouraged to share the many different ways they engage with politics in their own communities. Officers then provided information on how SWIPS members could get



involved within the City of San Marcos and give back to local San Martians. Their high level of organizational activity has led to SWIPS recognition on a university-wide scale.

In spring of 2026, SWIPS was featured in an article published by the *University Star*. The organization was recognized for its continued efforts to empower and support women in the field of political science. In the recent opinion piece, SWIPS highlighted the importance of creating inclusive spaces that encourage women to explore academic and professional opportunities in a traditionally male-dominated discipline. The feature highlights SWIPS's broader mission to promote representation, confidence, and access for women in political science and beyond.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & GUEST SPEAKERS

Throughout the 2025–2026 semesters, SWIPS repeatedly welcomed an organization called Across the Aisle to present information to its members. Founded in 2016, Across the Aisle is a nonpartisan nonprofit based in Washington, DC, that is dedicated to empowering young Americans to engage in civic life and public policy. Kathryn Thompson, a representative from Across the Aisle, shared how the organization creates opportunities for students to learn, lead, and collaborate on bipartisan solutions to national issues. She also walked students through the organization's application timeline and answered questions about how to get involved.

SWIPS officers also led an interactive internship workshop in which they highlighted two of the internship programs available at Texas State and through the Department of Political Science. The officers explained and outlined important deadlines and application steps for interested members. Officers also emphasized the value of professional headshots when applying for such opportunities and beginning one's career, and informed attendees that the LBJ Career Services Center offers free photography sessions for this purpose— an excellent and cost-effective option for obtaining professional quality headshots for an active LinkedIn page. In addition, the workshop covered strategies for strengthening résumés and building a professional online presence.

At another meeting, Trintiy Sutherland, a recruiter from the Peace Corps, was featured as the meeting's guest speaker. Sutherland shared insights into the organization's global mission, discussed her personal experiences, and provided valuable information about how students can get involved in international service opportunities after graduation. Her presentation inspired thoughtful questions and sparked interest among members eager to explore careers in global engagement and community development.

SWIPS was also responsible for coordinating a professional panel event for its members, where they welcomed six different local leaders: Dr. Helen Lowman, professor of practice in the Department of Political Science; Anthony Hipolito, sheriff of Hays County; Jane Hughson, mayor of San Marcos; Dr. David Levy, assistant professor in the Graduate Legal Studies Program at Texas State; Amanda Rodriguez, San Marcos City Council member; and Michelle Cohen, Hays County commissioner. After brief introductions, panelists shared insights into their career paths and the challenges they faced, as well as offering advice for students pursuing public service and legal careers. Officers then facilitated a question-and-answer session, followed by time for individual networking.

The Texas State Student Government, too, was a major topic of discussion in at least one of SWIPS's meetings. During their campaign, SWIPS welcomed student government candidates Johanna Ajayi and Keller Hammack of the "Bobcats in Bloom" ticket, who spoke about their motivations for running for student body president and vice president. The candidates highlighted key initiatives, including inclusivity, food security, and transportation, while also discussing the responsibilities of their prospective roles and ways for students to become involved in student government.

SWIPS also collaborated with Black Men United (BMU) Ambassadors for an open discussion focused on leadership and identity, during which participants explored how personal background can shape leadership experiences. Emphasis was made on the importance of women supporting one another, and discussions also addressed the impact of external pressures that may foster unnecessary competition between already marginalized groups.

Another meeting featured a guest presentation from Ms. Shekinah Wu of Career Services, who provided guidance on career paths related to political science and public administration, offered résumé feedback, and shared tips for interviews, career fairs, and networking. The meeting concluded with a question-and-answer session with Ms. Wu.

FUN, SUPPORT, & COMMUNITY

SWIPS is also an organization that enjoys incorporating a good bit of fun into its meetings. Herstory trivia is a favorite game that celebrates the contributions of women throughout history, and occasional theme nights feature activities such as "Guess Who: Humanitarian Figures & Scary Characters." These and similar events encourage connection, collaboration, and a bit of friendly competition. In this case, members enjoyed refreshments and laughter as they guessed each other's assigned characters, ranging from famous humanitarian leaders to spooky seasonal icons, creating a fun way to unwind after a demanding week of midterms.

To relieve stress before finals week, SWIPS held another game night to help students relax. Attendees spent the evening playing a variety of games. As always, refreshments were provided by the political science department, making the event even more fun, relaxing, and social. The officers were "very pleased to be closing out the semester on such a positive note." Meetings can also be highly interactive, with one consisting of a mock courtroom-style debate where members were assigned positions on a variety of topics to either defend or oppose within a limited time, followed by a final decision from a designated judge.

At the end of spring 2026, members were able to enjoy a "Study With SWIPS" session, where attendees worked on their upcoming assignments and prepared for their final exams. Officers shared several announcements, highlighting that SWIPS is seeking applicants for two open positions (treasurer and outreach coordinator) for the 2026–2027 academic year. Additionally, attendees of the final meeting celebrated Texas State's recently announced, official approval for an undergraduate minor in pre-law for interested students, consisting of 18 credit hours total, including 12 hours of required courses and 6 hours of electives.

MOCK TRIAL TEAM

The Mock Trial Team of Texas State University is a student-led competitive organization which provides future legal professionals an opportunity to develop trial advocacy and case management skills through intercollegiate mock trial competitions. Established in 2025 through the initiative of founding member Ms. Alyssa Thurman, it is the realization of a vision also articulated by Dr. Christopher Brown, faculty cosponsor, along with Dr. David Levy, both long-time members of the State Bar of Texas.

Members of the Mock Trial Team are presented with a hypothetical case packet presenting issues arising in civil or criminal law. Faculty advisers and guest lecturers give presentations on identifying relevant issues, understanding and applying facts presented, the rules of evidence, civil procedure, the examination of witnesses, legal ethics, artificial intelligence and the law, courtroom practice, and how to be an effective and zealous advocate for your client. The team then practices these skills under the direction of the faculty sponsors and prepares the hypothetical case for presentation in competitions.

On March 24 and 31, 2026, the Texas State Mock Trial Competition Team conducted its first ever scrimmage rounds at the Trauth-Huffman Hall (THH) Moot Court Room. Such scrimmage rounds serve to simulate a full-scale civil trial of assigned cases. In this particular scrimmage, *NITA Fire and Casualty Co. v. Rubino* served as a hypothetical case involving the allegation of fraud after the NITA insurance company received reports of alleged arson. Texas State professor and career legal professional, Dr. David Levy of the Department of Legal Studies, acted as judge for both scrimmage rounds. After an intensive two hours of continuous trial, the judge issued a ruling, finding for the defendant on day 1, and for the plaintiff on day 2. Throughout the rounds, every cross examination and objection sharpened the members' public speaking, legal reasoning, and collaborative teamwork skills.

A month after their initial scrimmage, the Mock Trial Team would celebrate the end of the school year with a banquet at Kerbey Lane café, where team members had the chance to share a meal and reflect on their experiences with the organization. The banquet also gave members an opportunity to discuss their plans for the coming year, and officers shared how excited they were to begin competing in the near future, as well as their plans on how to build up the team's skills through continued scrimmages in the meantime. They were joined at this banquet by faculty advisors, Drs. David Levy and Christopher Brown, who also expressed their pride in what the team has accomplished and praised the dedication exhibited by its members.

The team thanks Dr. Kenneth Grasso for his ongoing guidance and encouragement, along with the Department of Political Science staff, each of whom helped to make such events possible. Additionally, the organization thanks its faculty advisors, Dr. David Levy and Dr. Christopher Brown, for their unending support. They also recognize the efforts of the students who took their time to serve as evaluators in scrimmage rounds.

Both undergraduate and graduate students participate in the Mock Trial Team. Students interested in developing advocacy, public speaking, and legal analysis skills are encouraged to learn more about the Mock Trial Team and consider participating in future competitions. Officers for the 2026–2027 competition year include President Alyssa Thurman, Secretary Sir Lancelot Maberit, Treasurer Shreyani Puligal, Public Relations Chair Caroline Coyle, Social Media Chair Ritika Ramesh, and Travel Coordinator Nathan Mustapha. Officers' continual message to the rest of the student body is as follows: "We invite you to be a part of our organization!"



MODEL ARAB LEAGUE

CONFERENCE 2026

Model Arab League provides students with hands-on experience in international diplomacy, allowing participants to develop negotiation, research, and leadership skills while engaging with complex global policy challenges. Students from Texas State University's Model Arab League competed in two conferences during the spring of 2026: a February regional conference hosted in Houston, TX, and a national conference held during March in Washington, DC. These two conferences brought together university delegations from across the nation to represent member states of the Arab League in committee-based negotiations. At each, TXST students drew on months of preparation in parliamentary procedure, policy research, and public speaking to draft resolutions, negotiate compromises, and build coalitions with peers from other institutions.

The 19th Annual Bilateral Model Arab League was hosted by the Bilateral Chamber. At this regional conference, TXST students earned top recognition after competing in a diplomatic simulation focused on contemporary issues facing the Arab world. Competitors included students from the University of Houston's Honors College, Centenary College of Louisiana, and Houston Community College, among others. At the closing ceremony of the conference, two members of the TXST delegation received the Distinguished Delegate Award for their representation of Lebanon in the Joint Defense Council. The award recognized the team's subject-matter expertise, diplomatic leadership, and effectiveness during committee sessions, and recipients were Raihaan Girish and Alexandra Galdamez. Raihaan Girish, the president of the organization, said of the event, "It was really interesting to plan everything and compete with different schools. It was definitely a big transition for us since we were all encountering this type of competition for the first time. We're from different backgrounds, but we pulled off a great showing!"



Texas State students also experienced success at the national conference, where competing universities included Indiana University, Virginia Tech, and the University of Houston, among others. Alexandra Galdamez and Briana Ruiz won the Superior Delegation Award for their representation of the United Arab Emirates in the Council on Environmental Affairs. Dr. Hassan Tajalli, faculty coordinator of the student organization, emphasized, "Enthusiasm is hard work with a grin—and it always pays dividends. After weeks of research and debate, our students didn't just study Middle East policy—they wrote it."



AROUND THE DEPARTMENT

BOBCAT WELCOME EVENTS

On August 20, 2025, the Department of Political Science participated in multiple events designed to welcome students back to TXST as part of Bobcat Back Week. In the morning, the First Gen Welcome Orientation was held in the LBJ Ballroom. This event was followed by an academic services fair, also held in LBJ. Later in the afternoon, the College of Liberal Arts Welcome Back event was held in Flowers Hall. At all three events, Political Science hosted informative tables that featured details on academic programs, student groups, and upcoming events. Students had the opportunity to meet faculty members and spin a prize wheel for department swag, including tote bags, T-shirts, water bottles, and more. The department engaged with hundreds of students, fostering a sense of community and excitement for the upcoming year.

The events were spearheaded by Melissa Rendon, the department's student development specialist, as well as Dr. Roger Abshire. Other participating faculty included Dr. Franziska Newell, Dr. Alex Kroeger, and Emily Cedillo. Dr. Abshire remarked, "Meeting our incoming political science majors is always a gratifying experience. I still have fond memories of a student I met at the event several years ago who ended up in a few of my courses and eventually being able to congratulate her at her commencement ceremony."



MA ORIENTATION

For its graduate students, the MA in Political Science Program held an Open House in August that was hosted by the new director of the program, Dr. Ionuț Popescu. Conversations centered around opportunities available to graduate students and on ways to improve their graduate school experience. Students were able to discuss course selection, the possible concentrations of study in various areas of political science, department scholarships, and graduate instructional or teaching assistantship opportunities.

MEET THE PROFESSORS

In September, the department's annual Meet the Professors event, hosted by Discourse in Democracy, gave political science and public administration majors the opportunity to meet and speak with any of the 20 faculty members present to learn about the courses they teach, their backgrounds, and their areas of academic interest. Students were also able to learn about various groups associated with the department, including Pi Sigma Alpha, Supporting Women in Political Science (SWIPS), Model Organization of American States (MOAS), and Model United Nations (MUN). Attendees were then able to mingle informally with faculty and representatives of the various groups and organizations over pizza, cookies, and sodas. These students also received assorted departmental swag, including T-shirts, phone chargers, lanyards, hats, and more!



The events were spearheaded by Melissa Rendon, the department's student development specialist, as well as Dr. Roger Abshire. Other participating faculty included Dr. Franzi Newell, Dr. Alex Kroeger, and Emily Cedillo. Dr. Abshire remarked, "Meeting our incoming political science majors is always a gratifying experience. I still have fond memories of a student I met at the event several years ago who ended up in a few of my courses and eventually being able to congratulate her at her commencement ceremony."

GRADUATE SCHOOL FAIR

In October, the Graduate College partnered with Career Services to host the "Exploring Graduate School Fair." This annual event provides prospective graduate students with an opportunity to meet and speak with representatives from the Graduate College about Texas State's master's and doctoral programs. The fair provided prospective graduate students with direct access to representatives from the Graduate College at Texas State University, who offered detailed information about these programs. Attendees had the chance to explore various academic pathways, learn about program requirements, and gather materials to support their application planning.



Faculty and staff from the department were on hand to discuss admission requirements, funding opportunities, and potential career paths for graduates. "Events like this fair are essential for helping students see the full range of possibilities available to them," said an MPA student from the Department of Political Science. "It's not just about programs—it's about connecting students with opportunities that match their interests and ambitions."

LAW SCHOOL FAIR 2025

The annual TXST Law School Fair was held during the fall 2025 semester. Over 270 students attended the event, organized by Career Services alongside the university's official pre-law advisor, Dr. Ken Ward. The event provided students with the opportunity to connect with representatives from top law schools across the country, gaining valuable insights into various law programs, admissions requirements, and career paths in the legal field. Over 70 institutions participated, including the University of Texas, Texas Tech University, Texas A&M University, Boston College, Baylor University, Syracuse University, Louisiana State University, and Penn State.

The presence of so many law school representatives afforded attendees the ability to learn about opportunities that spanned from within the state of Texas to opposite sides of the country. While some students came to visit specific schools' tables, many were able to meet with schools they had never had experiences with before, where representatives offered students tips for strengthening their law school applications and resumes. Following the event, students spoke highly of the benefits they felt they had received by having so many options available for networking across the nation.

FIRST GENERATION WEEK

From November 3–7, 2025, Texas State University participated in First Gen Week, a campus-wide celebration recognizing students who are first in their family to pursue a college degree! Throughout the week, various departments and student organizations held events aimed at highlighting the challenges and achievements of first-generation students and connecting them with academic and social resources. The Department of Political Science got involved by providing resources and refreshments to students attending classes in Trauth-Huffman Hall. A come-and-go breakfast was provided in the morning, including donuts, muffins, coffee, and tea, to help students begin their day on a positive note. Around lunchtime, other snacks were provided to serve as a pick-me-up for any students facing the nerve-wracking midterm season.



OPEN HOUSE: SPRING '26

The Department of Political Science's Spring Open House took place in February 2026. The event welcomed both new and returning students and highlighted the department's academic programs, resources, and campus community. Attendees were given the opportunity to connect with faculty members, meet departmental staff, and build

relationships with fellow students in an informal and welcoming environment.

Over sandwiches, pizza, and refreshments, participants were provided information about the department's undergraduate and graduate degree programs, student services, internship opportunities, and upcoming events for the semester. The Open House mixer also featured a prize wheel that added fun to the afternoon, with players winning a variety of free department merchandise, from T-shirts to tote bags and other accessories.

One Master of Public Administration student reflected on the event as "a great opportunity to meet faculty and other students in the department," noting additionally that "networking is such an important part of the academic experience, and it's nice to have a department that cares about making connections." Another student emphasized the positive energy of the event, remarking that it was a wonderful way to begin the semester— surrounded by new friends, good food, and a strong sense of community.



BOBCAT DAYS

At Bobcat Day for Spring 2026, representatives of the Department of Political Science included Drs. Roger Abshire, Lauren Rowlands, David Levy, and Miha Vindis. A university-wide effort, the event is one which draws thousands of high school students and parents to campus to learn about Texas State. Attending faculty had the opportunity to chat with prospective students during the event, helping to answer any questions students might have about political science generally and the department, in particular. Our enthusiastic representatives connected with over a hundred high school students and their parents about



political science, public administration, and pre-law, all while distributing flyers on majors, degree plans, internships, careers, and courses.

The second Bobcat Day of Spring 2026 had Profs. Roger Abshire, Mari Garza, and Emily Cedillo representing the Department of Political Science. As at the first, the event welcomed thousands of prospective students and their families to campus for a closer look at what Texas State University has to offer. Faculty members were able to meet with attendees and provide insight into both the field of political science and the department itself, as well as the many opportunities they provide. They engaged with more than 100 students and parents, answering questions about political science, public administration, and pre-law while sharing informational materials on degree options, course requirements, internships, career pathways, and available classes. Dr. Abshire emphasized that the true value of Bobcat Day is that it "is a great opportunity for the department to make an outstanding first impression on prospective political science students."

PRE-LAW HOSTED SPEAKERS

In fall 2025, the Department of Political Science's Pre-Law Program hosted Roscoe Jones Jr., the dean of Drake University Law School and a professor of law, who visited TXST to meet with students and discuss the numerous benefits of law school. Jones emphasized that his goal was to "connect students to opportunities" they may or may not be aware of regarding law school in general. He discussed the costs and benefits of law school, emphasizing the flexibility of a juris doctor degree in today's professional world. Jones also shared the critical characteristics of a good lawyer (and a good law student) and highlighted the importance of practical knowledge beyond theory, as rooted in real-world experience. Student questions centered around Drake University's particular opportunities and benefits, advice for students who are uncertain about their next steps regarding law school, and the professional options for law school graduates.



Roscoe Jones Jr. earned his JD from the University of Virginia Law School after he graduated with high honors from Stanford University, receiving a BA in political science and history. His articles have been published in a variety of periodicals, including *Harvard Law and Policy Review*. He has been dean of Drake University Law School since 2024. Before this, his professional background involved being a partner with Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP; chief of staff to Representative Abigail Spanberger; legislative director to Senator Dianne Feinstein; and Assistant US Attorney for the Western District of Washington (Seattle), among other distinguished roles.

For Spring 2026, the Pre-Law Program hosted Dean Erika Fadel of Southern Methodist University's (SMU) Dedman School of Law for an informational session. Dean Fadel presented to almost 30 students about law school challenges and opportunities, both at SMU and across the nation, including her personal experiences. She also discussed in depth the admissions process, academic environment, and student life found at SMU. Her presentation was followed by a question-and-answer session, after which one student remarked, "I love how TXST creates opportunities to think about future plans for our students! It gives me the chance to see if something is a good fit for me."

MIDTERM CHECK IN: SPRING 2026

Midterm week is always a stressful time for students. To relieve some pressure, the Department of Political Science organized a Midterm Check-In event with over 200 attendees. Thirteen university support departments were hosted to provide students with resources before registration for summer and fall 2026 semesters.

Melissa Rendon noted, "One department even shared that after last year's midterm check-in, they met a student whom they eventually hired to join their team — and that's exactly what this event is all about: connecting students with the resources and opportunities they need. We are truly grateful for the university wide support that made this possible."

CAREER IN POLITICS

In April 2026, several student organizations from TXST attended "Careers in Politics 2026," a conference organized by the Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life at the University of Texas at Austin. The event offered students insight into diverse career paths in politics, policy, and public service. It also provided direct access to professionals working in campaigns, government, nonprofits, media, and advocacy. Additionally, there were résumé-building opportunities, including a station to take professional headshots.

Representatives of the following student organizations participated in the conference: International City County Management Association (ICMA) student chapter, Supporting Women in Political Science (SWIPS), and the Mock Trial Team. Several political science students who were not affiliated with an organization also participated in the event. Attendees spoke positively about the experience, especially the networking opportunities provided with the various esteemed speakers. Keynote speakers were Rep. Dade Phelan of TX House District 21 (a prominent Republican legislator and former Speaker of the House) and Samantha Lopez-Resendez, Democratic nominee for TX House District 50.



MSC SCONA 2026

Since 1956, the MSC Student Conference on National Affairs (MSC SCONA) has served as a nationwide networking opportunity hosted by Texas A&M University. Each February, approximately 150 delegates representing universities across the United States, the federal service academies, and the six United States senior military colleges gather to hear speakers and participate in roundtables focusing on the role of the United States in the global community. This year's theme was "Instruments of Power: American Influence on the Global Stage."

Three political science students participated in the 2026 MSC SCONA. Dakota Autrey, Grant Garcia, and Drake Maddix represented Texas State University in roundtables and cowrote multiple policy proposals on the topics of Taiwan, the US Foreign Service, and American Industrial Recharge through AI for the conference. Dakota Autrey's group, led by Ambassador (Ret.) Barbara Bodine, wrote the conference's winning policy proposal suggesting reforms to the US Foreign Service.

All students thoroughly enjoyed the experience. Drake Maddix said of the event, "It was both a hands-on environment focused on geopolitical issues, and also an opportunity to connect with amazing people." Grant Garcia, an ROTC cadet, remarked that "observing the deliberate leadership structure and planning process behind the conference" was very valuable.



UNDERGRADUATE EXPO

The College of Liberal Arts hosted the 2026 Undergraduate Expo in spring 2026, an annual opportunity for undergraduate students across COLA's nine departments (and three centers) to share their research. Students participated in oral or poster presentations, competing for recognition from a panel of judges as well as from their peers. Prizes were generously donated by TXST alumni, with 1st place winners of the Poster and Oral competitions each receiving a $1000 scholarship, and 2nd place winners receiving a $500 scholarship.

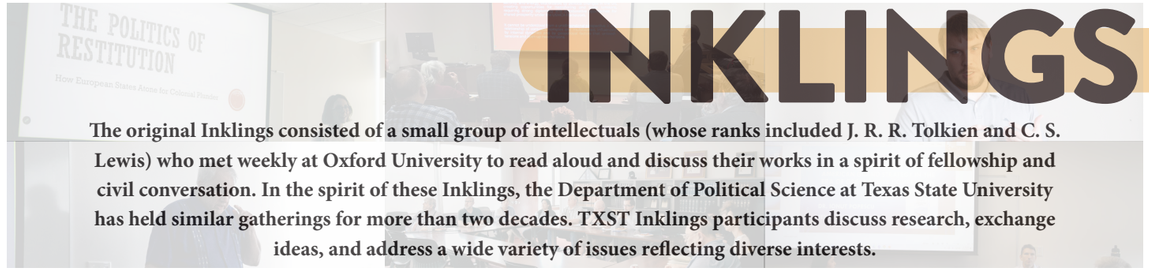
The following political science students' projects were featured in the expo:

- **Alondra Ayala**, "Civil Society Resistance to Third-Term Presidencies: Zambia and Cameroon in Comparative Perspective" (oral)

- **Haley Smith**, "Foundations in Decay: An Analysis of Democratic Backsliding in Mexico" (oral)

- **Danielle Rodriquez**, "Social Media & US Foreign Policy: How Digital Platforms Shape Responses to International Crisis" (poster)

An assistant professor of instruction and the department's associate chair, Dr. Vince Bagnulo, coordinated the department's participation in the event. He observed that students' efforts reflected their "dedication, diligence, and willingness to go above and beyond what is expected of them." Dr. Bagnulo emphasized further, "Each student's impressive work served as a reminder of the extensive talent and work ethic of political science students."



INKLINGS

The original Inklings consisted of a small group of intellectuals (whose ranks included J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis) who met weekly at Oxford University to read aloud and discuss their works in a spirit of fellowship and civil conversation. In the spirit of these Inklings, the Department of Political Science at Texas State University has held similar gatherings for more than two decades. TXST Inklings participants discuss research, exchange ideas, and address a wide variety of issues reflecting diverse interests.

FALL 2025

At the first Inklings gathering of the new semester, Dr. Ionuț Popescu, an associate professor in the Department of Political Science, gave a presentation on his book, *No Peer Rivals: American Grand Strategy in the Era of Great Power Competition* (University of Michigan Press). Published in April 2025, *No Peer Rivals* examines the role of the United States on the global stage as a major power in an era of intense competition between the U.S. and China. Joshua Honea, a graduate student in public administration who attended the gathering, said, "Our meeting over Dr. Popescu's talk was an excellent opportunity to engage with contemporary IR literature within the scope of American grand strategy from an offensive-realist perspective."

Dr. Chris Brown, a member of the legal studies and public administration faculties within the Department of Political Science, gave his Inklings presentation on "Corporate Lysenkoism: Trump's EPA, the Endangerment Finding, and the Future of Climate Change Policy," in which he explored key legal and policy developments shaping federal climate regulation. He discussed the ruling of *Massachusetts v. EPA* and its foundational test for standing, the EPA's statutory duty under the Clean Air Act, and the 2009 EPA Endangerment Finding issued under 42 U.S.C. § 7521(a)(1). Dr. Brown also shared findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) through its reports, emphasizing the growing manifestations of climate change—such as sea level rise, droughts, flooding, and extreme weather events.

At the final Inklings gathering of the fall 2025 semester, Dr. Scott Langford, an assistant professor in the Department of Political Science, presented on "Economic Crises: What We Know Today and How It Impacts Us." Dr. Langford opened by sharing some of the inspirations for his research, including how he felt the topic of local finance and its impact on communities started his journey. His discussion also explored the relevance of substance abuse, such as the opioid epidemic, and extreme weather events, such as hurricanes. Focusing on economic resilience, his presentation analyzed different economic shocks and their impact on their respective communities, which varied widely across places, even under similar shocks, due to regional and local differences.

SPRING 2026

At the first Inklings gathering of the spring 2026 semester, Dr. Ricardo Sanchez, a lecturer in the Department of Political Science, kicked off the series with his presentation on "Challenges and Opportunities for United States–Mexico Relations." This presentation explored the interdependent and multithematic relationship between the United States and Mexico. The main challenges Dr. Sanchez examined were immigration, security, organized crime, narco-traffic, political rhetoric, and judicial reform. Dr. Sanchez emphasized that "willing participation of the whole society" and extensive open dialogue are both needed to result in real change in relations between the two countries.

Dr. Franziska Newell's Inklings presentation was titled "Politics of Restitution: How European States Atone for Colonial Plunder." The presentation examined how European governments are responding to growing calls from formerly colonized countries to return cultural, spiritual, and historical artifacts held in Western museums. Dr. Newell explored the political challenges surrounding restitution and why it has only recently begun to appear on the policy agendas of many European states. Rather than being driven by binding international rules, she explained, restitution efforts often emerge through policy convergence as governments respond to actions taken by other states.

For the final Inklings gathering of the spring 2026 semester, Dr. Jacob Harvey, a lecturer in the Department of Political Science, gave a presentation entitled "Courage or Coin? Commerce's Impact on Martial Prowess." Dr. Harvey examined the perspectives of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Adam Smith regarding the effects of the growth of commerce in Europe. He explored their views on the social, political, and economic effects of this growth, as well as its impact on the military and education. Dr. Harvey then expanded his historical analysis to the modern day, addressing current dynamics in the American military.



ROLE UPDATES

DEPARTURES

The end of the spring 2026 semester proved bittersweet, with several members of the department entering new stages of their careers and lives. The Department of Political Science hosted a farewell gathering to celebrate these faculty members for their contributions during their time at Texas State and to wish them the best in their future endeavors. Department chair Dr. Ken Grasso remarked at the event, "We want to thank these faculty members for all they have contributed over the years to the department and university. They will be missed."

Dr. John Francis Burke, who received both his MA and PhD in government and international studies from the University of Notre Dame and had previously taught at TXST in the 1980s, has also decided to finally retire from the classroom. His published works include *Mestizo Democracy: The Politics of Crossing Borders* (Texas A&M University Press, 2002), as well as various articles for a wide variety of journals, including the *Review of Politics, Presidential Studies Quarterly,* and the *Journal of Peace and Justice Studies.*

Dr. Ezekiel Loseke received his MA in political science from Texas State University and his PhD in political science from Hillsdale College. During his time at TXST, he served as the faculty advisor for the Rho Eta Chapter of Pi Sigma Alpha, the national political science honor society; the coordinator for graduate instructional assistants; and book review editor for the *Catholic Social Science Review*. His departure from the department comes with a major development in his career—an offer for a tenure-track position at Angelo State University. Though he will be missed, the department wishes him nothing but the best of luck.

Prof. Jordan Villarreal, who received his MA in political science at Texas State University, served the department faithfully for several years. His time here was spent going above and beyond for the department, teaching incoming freshmen during a time of historically high enrollment levels at the university and providing invaluable assistance in directing the department's Discourse in Democracy and Inklings events. Now, his passion for teaching has led Villarreal to a full-time position with Austin Community College (ACC). Though Prof. Villarreal will remain with our department in a reduced, per-course capacity, his regular presence will be missed by students and colleagues alike.



RETIREMENTS

DR. CECILIA CASTILLO

"I must say that I am very happily retired after 35 years in the political science department. I will particularly miss faculty with whom I have shared decades of time, as well as meeting new students every year.

I began as a lecturer at Southwest Texas State University in the fall of 1991 and entered a tenure track position in fall 1992. I received tenure in 1998. In 2004, I became the graduate director of the MA program and continued as director for 20 years. I served as a member of the Texas Advisory committee to the US Civil Rights Commission for 17 years and as managing editor of the Catholic Social Science Review for 11 years.

My focus is fully now on family. My husband and I have several trips planned. We will be spending three weeks in Europe this fall and six weeks in spring 2027. In early 2028 we travel to South America and in fall 2028, we will head back to Europe. We are looking forward to traveling extensively for several more years. We also enjoy spending time with our two grandsons and babysitting as needed. We look forward to our growing family."



DR. ARNOLD LEDER

May 2026 marked the retirement of the department's longest-serving faculty member, Dr. Arnold Leder.

Dr. Leder received his PhD from Indiana University after completing his MA at Washington University in St. Louis. A specialist in Middle Eastern studies, he wrote a widely cited dissertation, "Kemalist Rule and Party Competition in Rural Turkey: Politics and Change in an Anatolian Community," which is considered a landmark in Turkish studies, as is his book *Catalysts of Change: Marxist vs. Muslim in a Turkish Community* (University of Texas Press).

Dr. Leder joined the department in 1972. During his more than 50 years here, he established himself as a legendary, award-winning teacher and a mentor to several generations of students. Over the years, he created and taught a vast array of diverse courses, including Revolution and Nationalism in the Middle East, Islamic Law and Politics, The Politics of Extremism, Basic Political Ideas, The Politics of Nationalities in the Soviet Union, Politics and Personality, American Foreign Policy Formation, The Politics of Peasant Societies, Senior Seminar, The Arab–Israeli Conflict, and The Holocaust.

A leading authority on Turkic peoples, he served as the senior policy analyst for Islamic and Turkic peoples for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty from 1981 to 1983, and again from 1991 to 1993. From 1987 to 1989, he served as chief of the Azerbaijani Service for the Voice of America in Washington, DC. In this capacity, Dr. Leder also assisted with drafting President Reagan's speeches during his 1988 visit to the Soviet Union. At the time, Azerbaijan was experiencing growing unrest under Soviet rule, and a speech Dr. Leder helped draft was interpreted by many Azerbaijanis as a sign of support from the United States for their cultural identity and aspirations. It helped launch the broader movement that ultimately led to Azerbaijan becoming an independent republic after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Dr. Kenneth Grasso, chair for the Department of Political Science, commented, "Perhaps no individual has contributed more to our department than Dr. Leder. Not only has he been a peerless teacher, but the very shape of our curriculum owes much to his work. He will be missed."



NEW FACULTY



DR. POOJA RISHI

Dr. Pooja Rishi grew up in Madras, India, receiving her undergraduate training in history from the University of Madras. Additionally, she earned an MPhil in international politics and disarmament studies from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India (2000), and a PhD from the University of Delaware (2010). She describes her training broadly as international relations, but her current interest is civic education and pedagogical best practices in an international context. She begins at Texas State with 22 years of US teaching experience, along with stories of her brief stint working in national security in India.

Prior to TXST, Dr. Rishi taught at South Texas College, the place where she found her calling to focus on general civic education and its role in fostering dialogues essential for democracy. Her recent works and consultations include those of Reese, Ben, and Patrick James, 2025, and "Gramscian International Political Economy from a Feminist Perspective" (2011, 2017). For the latter, a visual is available at Visual International Relations Project under the same title. In her free time, Dr. Rishi loves walking and pretending to be in a Jane Austen novel, reading, knitting, cooking, and eating. She also identifies as "a huge cinema buff."



DR. KATHLEEN WEAVER

Dr. Kathleen Weaver first received her BA from Tulane University in 2013, then her initial master's degree from NYU in 2015. Returning to Tulane, Weaver received another MA en route to her PhD, a program from which she graduated in May of 2026. Her fields of study are the domestic determinants of foreign aid, comparative welfare states, and public opinion.

Dr. Weaver comes to Texas State straight from completing her PhD at Tulane, during which she taught various courses on political economy, public policy, research methods, and American politics. Prior to beginning her PhD program, Weaver worked for the Murphy Institute, a political economy institute at Tulane, in a communications and research role. Before that, she served as an editorial assistant, then assistant editor on the politics list at Oxford University Press. Outside her academic endeavors, Dr. Weaver skated with a roller derby league for about three years in New Orleans and continues to love to roller-skate. She shared, "I may or may not be derby-retired in terms of playing games, but I'm excited to at least check out some bouts in central Texas, the birthplace of the sport!"



DYLANN ENGLE

Dylann Engle graduated from Texas State University with her BA in political science in December 2023, then with her MA in August 2026. Her preferred area of study is America's constitutional law—the document's history, its intellectual influences, and interpretative theories. Dylann has worked for TXST for nearly six years. During her undergraduate degree she served as a cataloging assistant at Alkek Library. While working on her master's degree, she was simultaneously employed as a graduate instructional assistant in the Department of Political Science and, eventually, became a graduate teaching assistant responsible for executing her own course.

Engle's thesis, "Behind the Forgotten Amendment: Our Right to Consent, Absent, Coercion," was made available in the TXST Digital Repository following her graduation in 2026. Academia, however, was not her first calling— Dylann remains a singer, songwriter, and rhythm guitarist at heart, with some of her music available for streaming and download across several platforms.



CADEN DOUGLASS

Caden Douglass graduated from Texas State University with his bachelor's in English and political science in 2022. In 2024, he graduated from TXST with his MA in political science. His favorite topics in the field revolve around nuclear weapons and the broader American political culture. He previously worked at Texas State as a graduate assistant, then for another semester following the conclusion of his master's program as a lecturer. Next, Douglass worked as a k-12 substitute for schools across San Marcos.

Douglass returned to a classroom of his own as an adjunct faculty member at Austin Community College, where he taught Texas state and local government. His free time is now spent with his favorite animals in the world— two beautiful cats named Luna and Cookie.

ALUMNI REPORT



MATTHEW HAYDEN

What year did you graduate?
I graduated from Texas State with an MA in political science in 2009. When I graduated, I was at a crossroads and not really sure what I was going to do next. I had been a middle school social studies teacher for most of my professional career. Following my graduation, I applied to several PhD programs but did not find a good fit and got discouraged. Still, I decided to send out another round of applications to PhD programs, then began to apply for jobs at local community colleges to get back into the classroom. I ultimately landed a job with Alamo Community College, where I was able to return to teaching. The lucky streak continued when I was accepted to the University of Utah halfway through my first semester at ACC. So, it was a whirlwind of moving to Salt Lake City and relearning how to deal with the snow after spending years in Texas!

What first interested you in political science?
What first got me interested in political science was a trip to Washington, DC, that my grandparents took me on when I was 9. They brought me to all the traditional tourist stops, but the tour of the Capitol building was what really struck a chord with me. We were able to watch an actual debate on the House floor, where Tip O'Neill served as Speaker of the House and dominated the dais. Later, I would read about the relationship that he had with Reagan, which taught me a valuable lesson: we can disagree on policy, but we can still be friends. Still, Reagan and O'Neill had some huge battles. O'Neill famously called Reagan "the most ignorant man who had ever occupied the White House." At the same time, Reagan said that after 6 p.m. they were friends, and the president would have O'Neill over for drinks. For Reagan, anything that happened before 6 p.m. was just politics—even when he referred to O'Neill as "a round thing that gobbles up money."

How has your undergraduate/graduate degree helped shape your future education and career?
The time I spent at TXST prepared me for my future by giving me the experience of teaching in the college environment for the first time as a graduate teaching assistant. As a professor of record for my own course, I was confronted with many of the issues I deal with on a daily basis today at Texas A&M University. The preparation required for writing my lectures, creating exams, and developing classroom management techniques all started with my experience as a grad student at TXST. It is the place where I fell back in love with teaching and found my true path. I will admit, however, that teaching a class of 125 like I did at TXST is far different from teaching a class of over 600, as I had this past semester!

What have you been doing since graduation?
I felt lucky when I graduated and received not only three interviews but three offers. While I had never been to College Station, the desire to be back in Texas after my PhD was pretty powerful, and A&M has absolutely been the right fit for me. I am currently an assistant teaching professor at Texas A&M, as well as the undergraduate internship coordinator, and I am leading a monthlong study abroad trip to Greece this summer, with another planned for December. I have been with A&M for four years now, and it has been a dream job.

What advice would you offer to undergraduate and graduate students pursuing political science?
My advice to political science students is simple: keep working on your writing. Writing is a craft, and like any craft, it requires constant practice. I remember taking a class with Dr. Grasso and getting a paper back that looked as if his pen had bled red ink across every page. At first, I was offended. Then I read his comments and talked with him—and realized he wasn't doing it because he was a Yankees fan and I was a Red Sox fan. He was trying to make me a better writer. Learn to accept constructive criticism; it is meant to help you improve. Learn to listen, too. That can be difficult for anyone, but especially for those drawn to politics. And surround yourself with people who see the world differently. My best friend in graduate school was a Turkish Kurd and a communist; I was an American Armenian libertarian. We could argue fiercely in class, then go out for pizza and a beer and talk about anything but politics. In the end, my advice is this: get outside, touch some grass, and take a deep breath of that great Texas air.



REYMUNDO "TONY" CHAPA

What year did you graduate?
I graduated from Texas State University in 2009.

What first interested you in political science?
As an undergraduate studying archaeology, I became fascinated by the rise of complex societies and ancient political economies. While we tend to think of politics as a modern development, it's fundamental to the human condition—regulating how we distribute resources and exercise power. I chose an MA in political science to better understand the theoretical frameworks of human organization. I wanted to leverage my political science education into a law degree to advocate in the public sector and labor movements.

How has your undergraduate/graduate degree helped shape your future education and career?
I ultimately returned to archaeology—where I've now practiced for nearly 30 years. But my political science background has continued to prove indispensable. Most of my career has focused on government compliance and Tribal consultation. I've learned that political systems permeate every aspect of our social lives. Understanding how these systems function, both historically and today, has allowed me to successfully advocate for preservation initiatives within complex regulatory environments. Ultimately, compliance in archaeology requires negotiation between modern cultural and political entities; my political science training taught me exactly where and how to direct my efforts to preserve our shared history.

Can you speak about the effect certain professors and/or courses had on your outlook and career?
I was incredibly fortunate to serve as Dr. Grasso's teaching assistant. As a professor, his lectures on Tocqueville and communitarianism helped me conceptualize Americans' collective psyche. Meanwhile, Dr. Castillo's courses on Aristotle became foundational to my outlook on faith and work ethic. More importantly, both professors helped me understand my place and purpose in society—clarity that I desperately needed as I transitioned from military to civilian life. Finally, Dr. Ken Ward's deep understanding of law, policy, and their societal impacts instilled in me a lifelong appreciation for being well-rounded, highly informed, and thoroughly educated on the regulations that constitute our civic "rules of engagement."

What have you been doing since graduation?
I've spent the last 20 years in the regulatory compliance space, helping the federal government honor its obligations to the environment and Tribal Nations. Currently, I serve as the director of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) Tribal Nations Technical Center of Expertise. In this role, I lead an enterprise center that helps USACE and the Department of War navigate complex challenges surrounding Tribal relations and the federal trust responsibility.

What advice would you offer to undergraduate and graduate students pursuing political science?
Never lose sight of the human element. Political science and governance mean nothing without people—there is no such thing as "politics of one." People are and will always be the conduits of political systems. So, I urge students to fiercely develop their interpersonal skills and expand their networks, even in areas that don't seem relevant to what they're doing now. Learn to look people in the eye, articulate your ideas with conviction, and sway perspectives. Remember: just as important as understanding a stakeholder's policy position is knowing who they are as a human being—the college they attended, the classic car they're rebuilding, and their kids' baseball teams. Fundamentally, politics is about human connection. The sooner you grasp that, the more influential you'll become in any political sphere.



WILL HOLDER

What year did you graduate?
I graduated from Southwest Texas State University (SWTSU) in December of 1977.

What first interested you in political science?
I have been interested in politics since a very young age, and that continues today. I was a total political junkie back then. My goal upon graduation from SWTSU was to find work on Capitol Hill and, toward that end, I immediately started my MBA at George Washington University studying government business relations. I still have 88 rejection letters from almost every member of Congress in 1980, when I was looking for a spot on a congressional team.

How has your undergraduate/graduate degree helped shape your future education and career?
After so much rejection I finally landed my dream job working for a congressman from Dallas. Although I enjoyed my time on the congressman's staff, I ultimately realized that a career in politics was a little too political for me. But I learned a lot about the world and how decisions are made and implemented, each of which were lessons that made a lasting impression on my career.

Can you speak about the effect certain professors and/or courses had on your outlook and career?
My favorite professor at Southwest Texas State University was Dr. Al Sullivan. He was a fascinating professor who brought the story of politics to life for me. I traveled to England with him for a summer semester to study European politics. That summer in England was a powerful learning experience for me.

What have you been doing since graduation?
After my stint in congressional politics, I ended up building homes and developing communities in Houston for roughly 35 years. I loved that career and found my experiences in the world of politics to be unexpectedly useful over the course of my land development career. I was able to apply my political and networking skills to getting many land development projects approved through various municipalities over the next few decades. I also found that, when I approached each new project through the lens of the local politicians, anything was possible if you could make everyone successful in the end.

What have you accomplished and still do you wish to to/have you accomplished during your career?
My homebuilding career has spanned more than 35 years and continues today as a professor of practice in residential construction here at Texas State. My professional and personal goal is to help as many Texas State graduates as possible find the same great career I did, building homes for Texans. Homebuilding represents more than 5 percent of the nation's gross domestic product, and nowhere is homebuilding a larger enterprise than in Texas. The opportunities for our graduates are fantastic, and I love making the connection between students and the industry.

What are your special research and/or professional interests?
I am presently writing the second edition of my textbook, *The Production Homebuilder*, with the objective of creating a residential college curriculum on the subject.

What advice would you offer to undergraduate and graduate students pursuing political science?
My advice is that unless students want to be political operatives or teachers, they should also pair their political science major to another field that directly relates to their everyday lives and career plans. Political studies are not an end, but a foundation for a future career.

CHEYENNE IZAGUIRRE



What year did you graduate?
I earned my bachelor's degree in history in 2015 and my master's degree in political science in 2019.

What first interested you in political science?
My interest in political science actually grew out of my undergraduate studies. While I loved studying history, I also wanted to broaden my knowledge and skill set to better prepare for a career in public service. As I began applying for government positions, I realized that political science would complement my background and provide a deeper understanding of the institutions and policies that I planned to work on.

How has your undergraduate/graduate degree helped shape your future education and career?
I was a nontraditional student, coming in full time after serving in the military. I knew I wanted to continue that service, but also study subjects that I love and enjoy—and this is the same advice I give to students. At the end of the day, it is your money and your future, so invest yourself where you will enjoy it. I know I absolutely loved my entire experience at Texas State University, as well as my graduate studies in the political science department. The flexibility I had in the political science program helped me to advance my career while also completing my studies. It felt like the professors genuinely cared about my success; with their support, I was able to excel.

Can you speak about the effect certain professors and/or courses had on your outlook and career?
It's been a while since I was on campus, but Dr. Castillo and Dr. Grasso were incredible mentors. I know Dr. Castillo has since retired, but her patience, encouragement, and thoughtful guidance made a lasting impact on me. She invested in her students in a way that I will always be grateful for and hope to pay forward throughout my own career. That said, I had wonderful professors across the department. I encourage students to build meaningful relationships with faculty, seek out mentorship, and never stop pursuing their goals.

What have you been doing since graduation?
Since 2018, I have served as a civil servant with the U.S. Department of State, a career that began while I was still finishing my final year of graduate school. I have done work in international security cooperation, diplomatic engagement, and now legislative affairs.

What do you wish to accomplish during your career?
At this stage of my career, I hope to continue shaping meaningful policy, mentoring the next generation of public servants, and advancing initiatives that make a positive impact on the American people.

What are your special research and/or professional interests?
My professional interests include foreign policy, national security, defense trade, and international partnerships.

What advice would you offer to undergraduate and graduate students pursuing political science?
Stay curious, push beyond what you think you're capable of, and never hesitate to help others along the way. Some of the greatest opportunities in life come from being willing to learn, taking risks, and investing in the people around you.

ALUMNI EVENTS

6TH ANNUAL TAILGATE

In October 2025, a group of Texas State's Department of Political Science alumni, each of whom works either at the State Capitol or in the Legislature, organized and held their sixth annual homecoming tailgate. The event was co-coordinated by Vanessa Cortez Tanner, an alumna who continues to serve as chief of staff for State Representative Brad Buckley, and Morghan Armenta, a K–12 policy analyst in the Office of Texas Governor Greg Abbott. About 30 Capitol Cats alumni attended the event, along with dozens of their friends, family, faculty, and interested students.



This was the group's second year of officially partnering with Texas State University through the Capitol Cats internship program, an opportunity that empowers students by providing them with the practical support necessary to participate in internships across the State Capitol in Austin. Both active and prospective students of the Capitol Cats program were able to connect with the alumni present, initiate networking relationships, and seek advice on job opportunities and internships for the coming spring semester.

Kaden Tucker, a 2025 Capitol Cats intern who attended the event, said, "Coming together at the Capitol Cats Alumni Tailgate was a powerful reminder of the strong community and shared commitment we carry from campus to the heart of Texas government. It was inspiring to connect with fellow alumni who are making a difference every day, bridging the Bobcat spirit with public service." He further emphasized, "Events like this not only celebrate our roots but also strengthen the network and friendships that support us in our professional and personal lives. It's a testament to how far we've come and the impact we continue to have for both the state and the university."

ALUMNI NIGHT 2026

In February, the Department of Political Science hosted its Spring 2026 Alumni Night, which featured a panel of alumni who discussed their careers and offered advice to attendees. Topics ranged from professional interests, such as how to develop lasting relationships with faculty members, to methods for finding relevant internships and getting involved on campus. Panelists also gave advice on avoiding burnout, building critical skills, and entering the workforce.

The panel concluded with a question-and-answer session, after which students and alumni continued the conversation informally over pizza and refreshments. Students who attended the event received plenty of department swag, including T-shirts, lanyards, and stickers. One political science student remarked, "Meeting the panelists was a fantastic opportunity for networking and learning some tips and tricks for success, both for the classroom and for the workforce. I especially enjoyed getting the 'inside scoop' on the master's programs offered by the department."









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TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Department of Political Science

FACULTY UPDATE 2025/26

Roger Abshire delivered a paper entitled "Article V Federalism and State Power to Rescind Ratification" at the 2025 Meeting of the Southern Political Science Association in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

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

Ashleen Bagnulo was a co-editor of *Augustine: Frontiers of Pluralism* (Routledge). Her contribution was entitled "'Break and be Broken': Frederick Douglass, Angela Davis and Augustine Confront the Lust for Domination."

Vince Bagnulo published "Envy, Imagination, and the 'Eternal Flight' of Equality: Tocqueville's Augustinian Perspective on Democracy's Path to Despotism and the Death of Pluralism" in *Augustine and Frontiers of Pluralism* (Routledge).

John Burke's "Pope Francis's Theology of the People: Tempering the Harmonious Articulations of Catholic Social Teaching with a Healthy Dose of Engaging Plurality" appeared in *Men as Creators and Subjects Across Disciplines and Cultures* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing).

Cecila Castillo serves on the Texas State Advisory Committee to the U.S. Civil Rights Commission.

Emily Cedillo serves as the department's assistant undergraduate coordinator for the department, as well as a University Mentor for Texas State's Undergraduate Research Journal (TXSTUR).

Thomas Cloud successfully defended his doctoral Thesis, "Leo Strauss and the Regime of Philosophy: Poetry, Cosmology, and the Degeneration of the West" and received his doctorate at Louisianna State University.

Paul DeHart published "The Freedom of Associations: The Necessity of Local Government for Republican Form," in *The Freedom of Associations* [Palgrave MacMillan]. He also appeared on the Sower podcast where he discussed natural law, consent, and the social contract.

Bill DeSoto served as a member of the City of San Marcos' Zoning Board of Adjustment and as a member of the university's Fulbright Grant Selection Committee.

Tom Doyle gave a talk on "Nuclear Weapons: Legal and Ethical Issues," as part of a workshop sponsored by the University of California, San Diego's Institute of Global Conflict and Cooperation.

Mike Faber presented "Criminal-in-Chief: A Critical History of Presidential Immunity," at the Midwest Political Science Association's annual meeting in Chicago.

Blake Farrar serves as the faculty advisor to Move Texas and is a board member of BTX Ballers.

Sheriff Folarin's book, *Declining Hegemonical Foreign Policies of Nigeria*, was published by Palgrave Macmillan.

Kenneth Grasso's article "Unruly but Self-Ordering: Reflections on Character in the American Experience" appeared in *The Catholic Social Science Review*.

Jacob Harvey gave a talk entitled "Courage or Coin? Assessing Rousseau and Smith's View of Commerce's Impact on Martial Prowess" as part of the department's Inklings series.

Alex Kroeger serves as program co-chair of the American Political Science Association's African Politics division.

Arnold Leder serves as the faculty advisor for Turkish Students Association.

Ezekiel Loseke's "Hume's Watertight Door: Justice Samuel Alito's Understanding of Religious Liberty" will appear in *The Catholic Supreme Court Justices* (University of Notre Dame Press, forthcoming).

Vance McMahan directs the department's Austin Legislative Internship Program, as well as the Chancellor's U.S. Capitol Internship Program.

Ed Mihalkanin participated in a panel sponsored by Discourse in Democracy and Pi Sigma Alpha on "American Foreign Policy and World Politics in a Rapidly Evolving World."

Sherri Mora published a new edition of her award-winning textbook, *The State of Texas: Government, Politics, and Policy* (McGraw Hill). She also serves as co-director of the department's Political and Public Advocacy Certificate Program.

Will Moravits supervises the department's Instructional Assistants.

Franzi Boehme Newell published "Restitution of Colonial Heritage Collections: Partial Norm Implementation in Belgium and the United Kingdom" in *The Review of International Studies*, and "Litigating War: Ukraine's Escalating Legal Rhetoric at the International Court of Justice," in *International Relations*.

Ionut Popescu's book, *No Peer Rivals: American Grand Strategy in the Era of Great Power Competition*, was published by the University of Michigan Press, and his article, "Adapting US Defense Strategy to Great-Power Competition," appeared in *Parameters*.

Lauren Rowlands directs the department's undergraduate program. She was interviewed on the history of presidential inaugurations on Fox News 7's *Good Day Austin*.

Ricardo Sánchez-Mendez's "*Reactivación de la Política Exterior Mexicana. Una Prioridad Impostergable.* (*Revitalizing Mexican Foreign Policy: An Unavoidable Priority*)" appeared in the Asociación de Diplomáticos Escritores (ADE).

Omar Sanchez edited *Democratic Institutions in Guatemala: Theory and Practice* (Rowman & Littlefield). He contributed three chapters to the volume: "Guatemalan Elections: Ineffectual Instruments of Democratization," "Why No Parties in Guatemala? Lessons from Party Building," and "Guatemala's Political Right: Electoral and Non-Electoral Strategies."

Hassan Tajalli's article "Comparative Study of Punitive Attitudes among American and Italian College Students" appeared in the *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice*.

Ken Ward serves as the university's Pre-Law Advisor.

Hyun Yun co-authored a chapter entitled "The Impact of Digital Partisan News Algorithms in the 2022 Midterm Election" that was published in *Media Messages in the 2022 Midterm Election: Division, Deniers, Dobbs, and the Donald* (Palgrave MacMillan).









TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY®

Department of Political Science



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