

POLITICAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER



Dear Members of the Political Science Department,

"Who am I? Why am I here?" was famously uttered by during the vice-presidential debate on October 13, 1992 by Vice Admiral James Stockdale, the running mate of independent candidate Ross Perot. The short answer is I am here because Natalie Taylor was asked by President Mark C. to serve as the acting Dean of the Faculty/Vice President for Academic Affairs, and she decided she "wanted to be in the room where it happens".

When reading the newsletter, the intellectual engagement of our students, faculty, and alumni never ceases to amaze me. I feel like there is a tremendous amount of energy in the department this semester, and not just because I teach in the classroom next to Professor Balogun's Hip Hop Politics class (evidently, Wednesday was Cardi B day). There are exactly 100 Political Science majors, making us the 5th largest major at Skidmore behind Psychology, Management and Business, Economics, and English. Thirty five of our majors and minors studied abroad in the past year in 17 countries across 4 continents, with Italy being the most popular country (6) and islands being the most desirable geographical formation (11 in the UK, Ireland, Japan, and New Zealand). Seventy five percent of our juniors studied abroad. More than 30 students contributed to the newsletter.

This semester, we are hosting or cosponsoring talks on the Middle East, Syria, the Zohran Mamdani campaign, Ukraine, and the Saratoga Springs city election. We are zooming in eleven alums to talk about life after the Political Science department. The Political Science Instagram page @skidmorepolisci has never been more viral thanks to Emily Landolfi and Erica Stern.

We are excited to have Kristen Morrow stay with us while I am on sabbatical in the Spring, Beau is teaching in the London FYE in the Fall, and Chris continues his research in service of democracy for the Center for Election Innovation & Research. While we miss the Professors Taylor and Stannis, Ben Sehnert is bringing some serious dark academia office energy to the study of political thought. Finally, we are very fortunate to have Adam Thal joining us from Loyola Marymount University and Meta in sunny Los Angeles to teach courses on the Presidency, Congress, and American Politics.

It is my 26th year at Skidmore, and this is my first stint as the chair of the Political Science program, although I have served as the Director of the Environmental Studies and Sciences program twice. I will be on sabbatical in the spring, but the department will be in the trusty hands of our associate chair, Professor Kate "Veep" Graney. My first act as chair was the purchase of a Meeting OWL, the "most engaging 360-degree hybrid experience," to liven up those virtual guest speaker classes. However, I want to hear from you. What great ideas do you have for building community in the department?

Finally, I will leave you with one piece of unsolicited advice I received from some alums in my group chat "Bob for Mayor". "We have already entered the phase where our interns consistently use AI to generate writing assignments, and they are helpless staring at the blank page. Tell your student to learn to write. Don't rely on AI. Have your professors rip apart your writing."

Tight lines,
Bob Turner

What is the first political event or experience that you remember?

Prof Biberman - The first political event I remember is watching tanks roll down the streets of Moscow. I didn't know it at the time, but it was an attempted coup by communist hardliners opposed to Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms. I grew up in Belarus, in the shadow of World War II atrocities, and I was terrified that another war was beginning. I remember feeling helpless and numb — a kind of surrender to whatever fate might bring, knowing there was nothing I could do. I grew up in an atheist society and knew nothing about religion, but I must have heard somewhere about the concept of God. For the first time, I turned to that concept. Studying political science helps me feel less powerless in the face of immense problems like war. Understanding is the first step toward solving. Who would have imagined that I'd one day teach courses like "Politics of Modern Warfare" and run wargames at places like the U.S. Army War College? I devote my research to examining political violence carried out by the most powerful actors, hoping that my work can help others avoid feeling helpless and hopeless in the face of conflict.

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Prof Turner - My first political memory is of my parent's eating dinner in front of the TV and watching the Watergate hearings. I remember being upset that I couldn't watch the Muppets on PBS because they said it was very important. For better or worse, it didn't discourage me from pursuing Political Science.

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Prof Breslin - I guess I would say the first national event I recall is the 1980 Republican National Convention, where the Republican Party nominated Ronald Reagan

for the presidency. I grew up in a conservative household, so Reagan represented a savior, a hope that America could once again be that "shining city on the hill." It did not impact my decision to pursue political science — I was in Middle School at the time — but as I look back on it I recognize so many of the ways in which politics can inspire (my Dad certainly was), mislead (as I now see), and change the course of a nation.

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Prof Sehnert - My earliest memory of a "political" experience would have been when my 1st grade class voted in our mock election during the 1996 presidential race. I was a low-information voter going into the polls and was easily swayed by a classmate who assured me that voting for Bill Clinton was in the best interest of American children. My budding interest in politics was then squashed during the Lewinsky scandal when my mother prevented me from participating in enlightened political discourse by obstructing my view of supermarket tabloids. So, these early experiences did not have an impact on my later decision to study political science.

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Prof Morrow - The first political experience I remember was going door to door with family and neighbors handing out literature for a local town election when I was about six years old. The candidate won and unseated an incumbent of almost twenty years. I think it did impact my choice to eventually pursue politics because I saw very early on the positive impact of a community working together.

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Prof Thal - The first political event I remember was when my elementary school held a mock election in 1996 where students could vote for either Bill Clinton or Bob Dole. The results were announced over the loudspeaker. It was then as a 10 year old that I knew I wanted to be a political scientist. Just kidding, but I do remember it being very exciting. It is also striking to think back on how the mood surrounding American politics was so much lighter at that point than it is now. Elections were mostly fun to experience, though I may have just felt that way because I was 10.

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Prof Ocakli - The first political event I attended was a military parade in the center of my town, Gebze, in northwestern Turkey. I must have been five or six years old. I went there with my grandfather, who bought me a helium balloon, which was only really available on parade grounds and similar events back then. So, I always wanted to go back for future parades. I remember a tank rolling down the street — must have been an American World War II era tank given to Turkey as part of NATO military aid. I remember finding that impressive. And rows and rows of soldiers marching and saluting the protocol seats that included the local administrators (kaymakam) and the local military brass. It must have been Republic Day (Cumhuriyet Bayrami), which is a national holiday celebrating the abolishment of the Ottoman monarchy and the establishment of the republic. While this event did not influence my choice to pursue political science research, the balloon certainly helped.

And, did it impact your choice to pursue political science?

Prof Balogun - I would say the first political event I can remember is staying up late with my parents to watch Bill Clinton play the sax on the Arsenio Hall show. I would also say that the Gulf War coverage is another primary memory. Neither of these events impacted my choice to pursue political science, but I would say the 1999 WTO protests in Seattle and the 2003 invasion of Iraq definitely shaped my interest in political science.

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Prof Mann - According to family legend, my first political experience was watching the Watergate hearings... but I have no recollection of it. A second family legend is being pushed in a stroller to go door-to-door for Barbara Flynn Currie, a candidate for the Illinois House of Representatives in 1978. She was an 'independent Democrat' challenging the infamous Chicago Democratic machine who was running to replace a retiring incumbent named Robert Mann, who was no relation. Representative Currie won, served my parents' neighborhood for four decades, rose to be Majority Leader of the Illinois House for 22 years, and was a role model and mentor for a lot of later female (and not female) candidates. I can't honestly say whether I remember the first campaign, but I definitely remember later going door-to-door for her in campaigns in middle school. I also remember that she gave out great Halloween candy during trick-or-treating (a lesson I never forgot: candidates should invest in good candy).

The early political experience that I most clearly remember is a parade in Chicago. I was in the crowd, sitting in a kid seat on the back of my dad's bike, which is how I got to most places. US Senator Chuck Percy (R-IL)

was walking in the parade. When Senator Percy saw me on the back of the bike, he came over and took the bike from my dad to ride it in the parade. While my parents call this my "kidnapping by Senator Percy", the truth is that my father had worked on his campaigns in 1966 and 1972, so he was a family friend. Senator Percy thought it was much better to be seen on a bike with a child than walking (another lesson I thought about when setting up photo ops for candidates later). I remember thinking it was really cool that so many people waved to me. The photograph of me riding with Senator Percy still hangs in my parents' house. These memories aren't why I ended up in political science, but only because I have so many more than just these early memories. I grew up in a political family in a political city, and most importantly in a time when there was political change, political reform, political progress.

Growing up on the South Side of Chicago, I saw the dark and dirty side of politics. But I also saw a neighbor and family friend, Mike Shakman, work tirelessly in court cases to break the patronage system of the Chicago Democratic machine in the 1970s. I saw my US Congressman Harold Washington (D-IL-1), and also from my neighborhood, elected as the first Black mayor of Chicago when I was in middle school. After college, I worked for Mayor Washington's successor: US Congressman - and founder of the Illinois Black Panther Party - Bobby L. Rush (D-IL-1). My neighborhood is, figuratively and literally, a place of "hope and change"... including a guy who said this phrase a lot. Barack Obama moved into my neighborhood (to be a professor!) and later became an Illinois state Senator representing my parents alongside Representative Currie. He moved on to bigger jobs in Washington... but only after he lost badly trying to unseat Congressman Rush (a lesson about not giving up in politics).

I got into political science because I've seen good people do good things in politics - Currie, Percy, Washington, Shakman, Rush, Obama. Democrat, Republican. Female, male. Young, old. Black, white. Insider, outsider. City, state, federal. Each is an extraordinary political actor, but also quite an ordinary person who simply decided to make a difference. Even when faced with dark prospects and long odds, politics allows ordinary people to do extraordinary things. Including me. Including you. Including now.

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Prof Graney - My earliest political memories are associated with watching the nightly national news with my dad. Well, actually, the TV was just sort of always on starting with the local news at 6 and ending with the MASH re-runs. See, screen time has always been a thing! I remember seeing and hearing a lot about the Vietnam war and peace talks, Watergate, "Middle East Envoy Philip Habib," and lots of other things. I do remember seeing footage from the jungle in Vietnam and understanding that it was something frightening and bad. And that Watergate was clearly something bad, but I had no idea what it was. I do think that media in general has had a huge impact on my decision to pursue political science. More than those early exposures, though, I think it was my viewing of the nuclear war films of the 1980s - The Day After, War Games, Threads, Testament—that scared me half to death and made me want to figure out why we had ever created such a stupid situation for ourselves. The answers have not been comforting, but the journey has been wonderful!

FACULTY NEWS



Emmanuel Balogun - I am excited to come back to the classroom after a year on sabbatical. It's been wonderful to connect with students again and experience the vibrancy on campus. I began my sabbatical celebrating a Boston Celtics championship then spent most of my sabbatical doing research for my new book on multilateralism in Africa. I also spent my time serving as a fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University, where I advised G20 governments on public infrastructure investment and building. I also published academic articles about vaccination politics in Africa, teaching during democratic erosion, the erosion of the anti-coup norm in West Africa, and bridging the gap between policy and academia in Africa.

I was able to travel to 7 countries while on sabbatical. The highlight of all my trips was having to shop for clothes in Korea after the airline lost my luggage, hours before I was meant to be at an event with Korean President Lee Jae Myung. I learned that the U.S. version of "2x1" and the Korean version of "2x1" are verrry different!

This semester, I've spent time in Washington D.C. attending an international security conference and in Denver, CO training graduate students on how to engage in the policy community as an academic. I am looking forward to taking students to Boston in November to participate in a workshop on careers in International Affairs. I am also looking forward to beginning my second season of coaching the 1st and 2nd grade Jr. Celtics in Wilton—we are trying to avenge our loss in last year's championship game! I am encouraged to see that some of my players had a growth spurt.

I look forward to seeing you all around the department!



Yelena Biberman-Ocakli - The past months have been writing-intensive, as I've been working on a book. In addition, I published an article entitled "Deterrence in the Age of Weaponizable Biotechnology" in the *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*. I presented my research on Asian security to the Department of Defense's Strategic Multilayer Assessment program under the Joint Staff's J-39 Deputy Directorate for Global Operations. I served as a judge for the American Political Science Association's Summer Centennial Center Research Grants and a reviewer of a textbook proposal for Bloomsbury Publishing. I was also interviewed for a podcast called Very Special Episodes.



FACULTY NEWS CONTINUED

Beau Breslin - I've been hard at work on my book project, *Founding Edits* (Stanford University Press, to be published sometime in the future), while spending a good deal of time on more accessible, public-friendly projects: WAMC's Roundtable, [The Fulcrum](#), the [Albany Times Union](#), etc. I've also been traveling a good deal: London, backpacking in the Alps, Montenegro, Croatia. One recent trip affected me deeply. I visited the [Legacy Sites](#) in Montgomery, Alabama. They were extraordinary in their beauty and power. All Americans should see these venues dedicated to telling the story of America's regrettable history of slavery, Jim Crow, segregation, lynching, and mass incarceration.



Kate Graney - I was honored to deliver a paper in honor of my Ph.D. advisor, Professor Mark Beissinger, at a conference celebrating his retirement from Princeton University in October. It was wonderful to catch up with old friends, including Professor Ed Schatz from the University of Toronto, who was in the same cohort as Prof. Turner at the University of Wisconsin many years ago! (And whose brother is Senator Brian Schatz from Hawaii.) I am also busy helping to organize the upcoming Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration weekend in Saratoga Springs, and the annual North East Eurasian, East European and Slavic Studies Association conference at NYU in April.

Photo: Kate Graney, Prof. Mark Beissinger (Center), Prof. Ed Schatz, at Princeton University, October 24, 2025.

Chris Mann - The fall semester has been busy with my Scribner Seminar on Hurricanes & Forest Fires, as well as my continued research on election administration. I always like the change of pace when teaching the Scribner Seminar - a little less political science and a little more earth science in my intellectual diet. And I have a fantastic set of first year students this semester. In my role leading the Research Team at the Center for Election Innovation and Research, I've gotten to travel to talk with election administrators, policy makers, and other researchers in many places including Washington DC, San Diego CA, Kansas City MO, Pittsburgh PA, LaCrosse WI, and several other places. One favorite trip was Vancouver BC for a conference where I talked with Canadian election officials and election research nerds from around the world.

I'm looking forward to sharing what I have learned with you next semester in **PL223: Voting in the US: Access, Fairness & Reform**. It's perfect time for this course with the 2026 primary elections during the semester and the 2026 mid-term general election on the horizon. (FYI - this course is currently listed as a 300-level course on the Skidmore website, but I have changed it to a 200-level Bridge Experience course. Same course as before, just a new number and counting for Bridge Experience.)



FACULTY NEWS CONTINUED



Photos: Pumpkin decorating with new faculty friends.

Furry friends: Auggie the pup and Piper the cat.



Kristen Morrow - I am truly enjoying exploring Saratoga Springs after moving here this fall! It has been a joy getting to know my students, colleagues, and the larger Skidmore Community. Outside of class, I am currently working on an article related to governors in the media as well as continuing a book project on the consequences of low public of the modern House Speakers. I am very much looking forward to getting to meet even more Political Science students next semester!

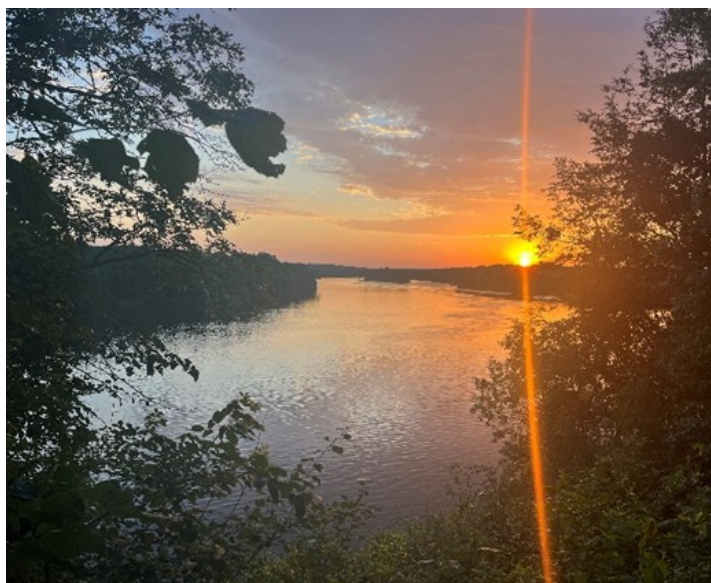
Feryaz Ocakli - I spent some time in the summer in Turkey, developing my research on the international politics of food security. There, I met with a colleague with whom we are working on organizing a panel of experts on the development of Turkey's food security policies sometime in the coming year. I wrote and submitted an article on the informal money transfer system called "hawala." The article examines how undocumented Afghan refugees stay financially in touch with their families back home through the hawala system. Although this informal money transfer system has been thoroughly criminalized due to its potential connections to money laundering and the financing of terrorist organizations off the books, the growth of a marginalized and undocumented refugee population has breathed new life into it due to financial sanctions on Afghanistan, and the inability of the refugees to open official bank accounts. I argue that hawala must be reassessed as the financial means of the underbanked and the marginalized, and not necessarily criminalized. I also worked with Lucas Gutierrez-Arnold'26 on food security policies of Brazil, Argentina, and Chile over the summer.



FACULTY NEWS CONTINUED

Benjamin Sehnert – Perhaps the most significant piece of news of the past several months was the extension of my stay at Skidmore for another two years. I was absolutely overjoyed to be given the opportunity to stay here and continue to work with such terrific students and colleagues. On top of that, I have the time to focus on tying up loose ends in my never-ending research on Hannah Arendt.

This summer, I was able to read through all of Hannah Arendt's published works before 1951, translating her many newspaper editorials from German into English. Although tedious, I was able to complete most of this on the banks of the Mississippi River in my much beloved home state of Minnesota (with day trips to the greatest of the Great Lakes, Lake Superior). Overall, I enjoyed a very pleasant summer before a happy return to Skidmore for the Fall 2025 semester!



Adam Thal – This summer I moved to Saratoga Springs to start my new job at Skidmore! I previously worked as a professor at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. I am originally from New Jersey, so I am excited to be back on the east coast. I moved along with my wife, 4 year old son Russell, 3 month old son Sandy, and our beagle mix Desi. When I wasn't stressed out about moving cross country with a newborn baby, I worked on a few different research projects including one paper about the politics of teaching about racism and another about the political effects of social media. I also worked on my book project, which considers the politics of rich people and how they respond to rising inequality.



Bob Turner - I gave a guest lecture on interjurisdictional tax competition at Stanford Law for Joe Bankman and on immigration reform to the Skidmore Mature Learner Series. I have also been busy taking my Real Democracy class to local campaign events this fall, where we met our local Representative, Paul Tonko. Fishing this fall has been very tough between the lack of rain and teaching, but I have had some nice late afternoons on the Hudson.



We welcome Prof Kristen Morrow to the PL department

Katy Maccarrone '26

The Political Science Department is thrilled to welcome Professor Kristen Morrow as a visiting assistant professor! Originally from Huntington, New York, Professor Morrow joins Skidmore from Ursinus College and is happy to be back in her home state.

Professor Morrow grew up surrounded by family and friends involved in local politics, and an engaging AP Government class and the 2008 election during her freshman year further inspired an interest in politics. At Adelphi University, she double-majored in political science and communications, taking internships that led her to the New York State Assembly and a semester in Washington, D.C. She also took a class on the art of the interview in college, and says that if she could teach outside political science, it would be in journalism.

After graduation, Professor Morrow spent time working on Capitol Hill, where she witnessed grassroots movements gain traction and public opinion as a powerful force in American politics. These experiences pushed her to graduate school, where she studied Congress and the media, subjects that continue to shape her current research interests. Professor Morrow is now working on a book project about how public opinion of the Speaker of the House affects the role, drawing inspiration from scholars like Dr. Matthew Green and Douglas Harris's work on Congress.



This fall, Professor Morrow is teaching Introduction to American Politics and Campaigns and Elections. In the spring, she plans on teaching another section of Intro, as well as courses on Public Opinion and the American Party System. She is especially excited to teach a midterm campaign class next fall as the upcoming election cycle unfolds. In the classroom, Professor Morrow begins by asking a big guiding question to ground the class as they work through the material. She encourages students to apply political ideas to current events and pursue more hands-on experiences.

Beyond her academic work, Professor Morrow spends time with her puppy Auggie and cat Piper and watching shows like Ted Lasso for its optimism and Veep for its realism. She also reads fiction and fantasy, and recommends Rebecca Ross novels for an exciting escape. Her mother recently did some genealogical work and found roots throughout Scotland, where they hope to visit together. We are delighted to welcome Professor Morrow Ladd Hall -- keep an eye out for her upcoming classes!

THANK YOU TO OUR STUDENT CONTRIBUTORS AND ALUMS

Abigail Scifres '26, Adya Sehgal '26, Annabelle Winston '26, Anne Huffines '26, Annie Obrecht '27, Audrey Davies '27, Beal St. George '14, Becky Stern '14, Bella Bruno '25, Bradley Kadets '27, Bridget Coyer '25, Cassidy Goda '28, Cate Cochran '27, Chris Iredale '11, Dan Miller '15, Darek Silva '27, Elena Veatch '16, Eli Lewis '26, Emily Landolfi '27, Emily Mangan '16, Erica Seifert '02, Erica Stern '27, Flora Elghanayan '26, Isabella Lenarduzzi '26, Jazlin Chen '26, Jonah LeCompte '25, Josiah Fuentes Medero '26, Jude Gwak '28,

We Welcome Prof Adam Thal to the PL Department

Katy Maccarrone '26



After graduating, he went on to earn his master's and PhD at Princeton University. During this time, he also taught at an elementary school in New York City, observing the inequalities low-income students face. This experience shaped both his research and teaching;

Professor Thal's academic focuses include the politics of economic inequality, how the wealthy respond (or do not respond) to it, and the political effects of social media. He admires the work of Larry Bartels and Martin Gilens, who have written about public opinion and inequality in democracies.

This fall, Professor Thal is teaching a course on the American Presidency. In the upcoming semesters, he plans to offer courses on Congress, Introduction to American Politics, and Media and Politics. He is also designing a lab-based course on researching policies, aptly titled "Policy Lab." Professor Thal's teaching philosophy emphasizes not accepting theories as truths, but applying them to reality. He encourages diverse kinds of participation and meaningful engagement with others in his classroom. For Professor Thal, the freedom of directing his own classes is both a challenge and a reward. His advice to students is to not focus solely on good grades, but to create opportunities for themselves and find roles beyond the classroom.

Outside of class, Professor Thal enjoys spending time with his family, running, yoga, and misses the amazing vintage shopping scene in Los Angeles. He enjoys traveling and he would like to explore Southeast Asia, particularly Cambodia, Vietnam, and Thailand. If he could teach in any other discipline, it would be a course on literature and translation. His favorite book recommendation is WG Sebald's *Rings of Saturn*. We are excited to have Professor Thal with us this year, and be sure to look for his classes in the spring!

This year, the Political Science Department is excited to introduce Professor Adam Thal as an assistant professor at Skidmore! Professor Thal comes to us from Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles and is already a welcome presence in Ladd.

Professor Thal began his academic career as an undergraduate research assistant at the University of Wisconsin, where he admired the work and lifestyle of the professors he worked with.

THANK YOU TO OUR STUDENT CONTRIBUTORS AND ALUMS

Justin Pollard '27, Kate Sterling '27, Katy Maccarrone '26, Laura Swartz '10, Liam Slawsby '28, Lila Glanville '26, Lila Smith '26, Lily Tracy '26, Lucas Gutierrez-Arnold '26, Lucy Koslow '26, Madelyn Besikof '26, Mariama Dabo '28, Natalie O'Neill '26, Nathan TenBroeck '28, Nick Hara '11, Nigel Smith '19, Sabrina Dabakarov '20, Sam Severs '27, Sarah Saviskas '09, Shay Weissmann '27, Sophia Peterson '26, Will Tone '23, Virgil Sharon '27

Summer 2025 Experiences

The Levine Internship Award

Annabelle Winston '26

This summer, I worked with the Government Law Center (GLC) at Albany Law School, an office dedicated to advancing the study of government law and improving public understanding of legal systems. I learned about this opportunity after connecting with Patrick Wildes, Director of the GLC and a Skidmore graduate, who visited campus last spring to meet with students interested in law. As a Summer Legal Fellow, I took part in a mix of independent projects and collaborative experiences. My long-term office assignments included drafting legislative memos and conducting research on public authorities to update the Center's clearinghouse. In addition, I participated in frequent site visits across the Albany legal community, ranging from meetings with judges and Albany Law alumni to visits to the New York Court of Appeals and Troy City Court. These experiences combined direct participation, observation, and professional engagement, and gave me meaningful exposure to the legal profession from multiple perspectives.

Through these projects and interactions, I strengthened my legal research and writing skills, developed greater confidence in professional communication, and gained a deeper appreciation for the range of careers within the field of law. The foundation I built this summer has increased my interest in pursuing law school.

The Levine Internship Award

Sam Severs '27

This summer, I interned with the Office of Council Member Christopher Marte in New York City, where I assisted the team in addressing community issues and researching local policy questions. A part of my job involved responding to calls and emails from residents regarding issues such as noise complaints, housing problems, and sanitation concerns, and then collaborating with city agencies to ensure these problems were being addressed. I also helped prepare letters for nonprofits that received city funding and tracked service requests from across the district.

On the policy side, I worked on several research projects, including a report on the city's scaffolding reform proposal, background on a long-vacant city-owned lot on the Lower East Side, and data on school enrollment and affordable housing trends. I also drafted outreach emails encouraging other Council Members to support legislation on accessibility, bike share expansion, and environmental safety. Sitting in on advocacy briefings and neighborhood meetings gave me a clearer sense of how community input shapes city decisions. By the end of the summer, the internship helped me understand how

Summer 2025 Experiences

SEE Beyond Award

Josh Maxwell '26



I had an incredible summer internship at the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York. I interned in the Office's General Crimes unit and performed many paralegal responsibilities. I assisted with investigations and trial preparation, observed meetings and trials, and had the opportunity to perform paralegal responsibilities during a court hearing. This experience provided me with close view of the American federal justice system and allowed me to apply my academic knowledge and skills in a professional setting.



SUMMER 2025 COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH PROJECTS

Unconstitutional Changes in Government: Legitimizing Leadership

Justin Pollard, 2027 with Emmanuel Balogun

This past summer I was lucky enough to work under the guidance of Professor Emmanuel Balogun to contribute to the field of comparative political science research. My research focused on unconstitutional changes in government, like coups, revolution, etc, and how state-building processes depict a way to interpret the future of a nation.

My research focused on the past and present political action of executives in Burkina Faso and Syria. These states both have experienced authoritarian regimes for decades of their political history, but have recently seen change from the status quo. Under the new leadership of each country respectively there are aspects of institution building, or institutional decay that, according to the concept of path dependency, will shape the future of each state. The situations in both Burkina Faso and Syria are still developing, there is much more change to come, which is why we should continue following it.

(A special thanks to Professors Balogun, Yildiz, and Ocakli for their guidance in the project, as well as the Mellon Foundation for providing funding.)

SUMMER 2025 COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH



Citizenship under watch: Navigating Democracy and Security in South Asia. Does Education Strengthen Democracy?

Adya Sehgal, 2026 with Yelena Biberman-Ocakli

This summer, I had the opportunity to explore a question that felt both timely and deeply personal: *Can education foster support for democracy in militarized environments?*

With mentorship from Professor Yelena Biberman, I conducted original quantitative research examining whether the **quality** of higher education beyond just access actually helps shape students' democratic attitudes in Kashmir, one of the most militarized regions in the world. In August 2019, Article 370, which had granted Jammu and Kashmir special constitutional autonomy, was revoked. This marked a turning point in the region's politics, intensifying the presence of the military in everyday life. Soon after, a survey was conducted with 593 college students across Kashmir, and that dataset became the foundation for my project.

I began by constructing an education quality index, which captured more than whether students were simply enrolled. It considered how they experienced their education: the nature of their interactions with teachers, their curriculum, the availability of extracurricular opportunities, and their perceptions of academics overall. With this index in hand, I ran multiple regression models in Stata to see how education quality related to three outcomes: belief in free and fair elections, support for minority rights, and support for military rule (reverse-coded to capture authoritarian or radical leanings).

Each day was a mix of technical and intellectual challenges. I spent mornings cleaning datasets and refining statistical models, and afternoons diving into political science literature that often challenged my assumptions. Sometimes the models forced me to question my variables or rethink how I was measuring democracy. Other times, the results were so striking that I found myself cross-checking them over and over just to be sure. *Continued on page 11*

SUMMER 2025 COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH

Adya Sehgal. Continued from page 10

The results were compelling. Students who reported higher-quality educational experiences were consistently more likely to endorse democratic values such as minority rights and free elections. At the same time, they were less likely to support military rule or radical alternatives. In a region where militarization can normalize authoritarian structures, classrooms seemed to play a quiet but vital role in nurturing democratic attitudes.

This project taught me far more than how to code regressions or interpret coefficients. It showed me what it means to turn urgent, real-world problems into rigorous, testable research. I learned that political science requires both precision and creativity, precision in ensuring models are sound, and creativity in translating abstract questions about democracy into measurable variables. Most importantly, I came to see education differently. In militarized regions, teaching is not just about jobs or skills, it can be an act of democratic resistance. Classrooms become spaces where critical thinking, tolerance, and civic responsibility are cultivated, even when political institutions feel fragile.

For anyone interested in political science research, I can't recommend summer research with faculty enough. It is intense and immersive, but it offers the chance to connect what you learn in class to pressing issues in the world. For me, it was a reminder that education matters not just for individuals, but for the future of democracy itself.



**It's not too early
to think about
and plan
for the summer.**

SUMMER 2025 COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH

A Maize of Institutional Strategy: Proactive policy making and the modern agricultural boom of Brazil and Argentina

Lucas Gutierrez-Arnold, 2026
with Feryaz Ocakli

This past summer I had the pleasure of working closely with Professor Feryaz Ocakli as a part of the Skidmore Faculty-Student Research Program expanding upon ideas that were first introduced to me in the Fall of 2024 when I took his class on Food Politics. The research done this summer was a part of a broader research project which Professor Ocakli has been working on with the objective of writing a book on Global Food Security. The research question of this project had originated from a paper I had written on Chinese and Brazilian Interdependence through the lens of the global soybean complex. The original research question, and topic, which was used in the original paper was then adapted and shaped to better fit our goals of investigating the overall importance of Latin American agricultural and livestock production as its relevance to the global food supply chain has seemingly grown exponentially within recent decades.

The 10-week period in which our research was conducted allowed for the creation of a fairly consistent daily schedule. Considering a majority of the research conducted was an investigation of secondary sources and analysis of

datasets, I would find myself out on Case Walkway sitting with other students involved in Faculty-Student research. We would typically bounce ideas off one another or just sit in each other's company while reading or writing, eventually taking a break to go grab lunch at the Dining Hall before heading back to work.

As for the results which were achieved after weeks of working under the shade of the beautiful trees on Case Green, no definitive claims could be made about a causal relationship between the strength of Brazil's institutional framework and its recent growth as compared to the Argentine framework, and the stagnation they have experienced recently within the investigated sectors of soybeans and maize. That being said, the conclusion remains that there is a correlation between the recent growth of Brazil's agricultural and livestock industries due to institutional strategy originating from the federal governments as compared to Argentina. I hope that future students will be able to continue the work that I started with Professor Ocakli and experience the intellectual joy that I did while conducting research this past summer.



Annabelle Winston learning about legal research in the Albany Law Library — bottom page 13.

Visiting NY's Appellate Division 3rd Department, and speaking with the Justices - left, this page.

SUMMER 2025 EXPERIENCES

Summer Legal Fellowship at the Government Law Center

Annabelle Winston, 2026

This summer, I had the opportunity to work as a Summer Legal Fellow with the Government Law Center (GLC) at Albany Law School, thanks to the generous support of the Levine Internship Award through the Summer Experience Fund (SEF). The GLC is a research and policy center dedicated to advancing the understanding of government law, with a focus on New York State law. It develops nonpartisan resources essential for government function, and to make complex legal issues accessible to the public. It also promotes and facilitates dialogue between government branches (that may otherwise be somewhat disconnected) through projects such as its Improving Interbranch Communications Project.

I first learned about the GLC through a Political Science event for students interested in law, where I heard Patrick Wildes speak, a Skidmore graduate and Director of the GLC. His visit introduced me to the wide-ranging work of the GLC (and Albany Law School in general), and later, to the fellowship opportunity that would become my summer experience. The Levine Internship Award made it possible for me to accept this position and fully engage with the hands-on learning experiences the fellowship offered.

My daily work at the GLC consisted of independent and collaborative projects. I drafted internal legislative memos and conducted in-depth research on public authorities to help expand the Center's public authority's clearinghouse, a resource designed to make government data on elusive public/private agencies more comprehensible and accessible to the public. My research deepened my understanding of how law intersects with governments and public administration. I highly recommend that students venture beyond the classroom towards experiences like these because there are certain things you simply cannot learn without hands-on involvement.

Beyond the office, I participated in frequent site visits throughout the Albany legal community. I observed proceedings at the New York Court of Appeals and Troy City Court and met with judges and Albany Law alumni, including the Honorable Leslie Stein. These visits were among the most memorable aspects of my summer, as they revealed the diversity of legal careers that exist within and beyond the courtroom. Each meeting and visit offered a new perspective on what it means to work in law, emphasizing that not all legal professionals are litigators. Many contribute instead through policy work, legislative research, or judicial administration, roles that I have seen (in action!) to be essential to the broader functioning of our legal system.

Through the fellowship, I not only refined my legal research and writing abilities but also strengthened my professional communication skills by engaging with attorneys, judges, and scholars in formal and informal settings. The environment at the GLC encouraged curiosity, precision, and adaptability, all skills that I know will serve me well as I continue exploring careers. Not to mention, the staff were excited to have legal fellows, setting aside time to get to know each of us and how to best support our learning outcomes throughout the summer via work assignments and site visits. I strongly encourage other political science students with an interest in law to explore opportunities like this one. The GLC fellowship is an ideal introduction to the analytical reading, writing, and reasoning skills central to legal work, and it highlights fulfilling paths within the field that extend well beyond the traditional courtroom setting.



Syria and the Geopolitics of the Middle East

Lucas Gutierrez-Arnold, 2026

In

December of 2024, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) a jihadist organization, led by Ahmed al-Sharaa, focused on the liberation of Greater Syria, advanced into Damascus and overthrew authoritarian President Bashar al-Assad who had been in power for more than two decades. The fall of the Assad marked a new beginning not only for Syria, but also for the overall international relations of the region. Since the Syrian regime change, al-Sharaa, who assumed the role of President after HTS took control of Damascus, has begun the process of rebuilding the nation-state which is Syria. The major issue for al-Sharaa, and the newly formed Syrian government consisting of the now defunct HTS, is the lack of internal sovereignty within Syria. Currently, al-Sharaa's government only controls portions of Syrian territory while non-state and foreign actors such as the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA), Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), and other unidentified opposition groups control other large portions of Syrian territory outside of Damascus. The question on what the future of Syria looks like, and what must be done to unify Syria under one government, was the aim of a presentation given by our very own Professor Feryaz Ocakli earlier this semester.



On September 11th, 2025, as a part of the on-going departmental talk series, aptly titled, *The Department of Political Science Presents*, Professor Ocakli presented the Skidmore Community with a masterclass on all the essential information necessary to understand the complex nature of Syrian politics, and moreover, the current geopolitics of the Middle East. Professor Ocakli began the talk by expressing that he truly believes, “what’s going to happen in Syria by the end of this semester, is really going to shape the future of Middle Eastern international relations in the coming years.” Considering the relative surprise that was the successful overthrow of the Assad Regime which has created the possibility for new conversations to be had about the geo-strategic position of Syria in relation to Israel and Iran, signifies the immense importance of this topic looking forward.

Current global conflicts including the Russia-Ukraine War, the War in Gaza, and the Israel-Iran Conflict has created a unique position for the future of Syria. A nation which previously, under Bashar al-Assad, maintained a certain level of regional power and ability to act on others, is now extremely reliant on external actors to function. Moreover, prior to recent events, the so-called Axis-of-Resistance against Israeli dominance, consisting of an informal coalition of Iranian backed militias like Hizballah, Hamas, and the Houthis, has all but collapsed. Additionally, Russia, which historically backed the al-Assad Regime and has maintained a presence in Syria, has been otherwise occupied with Ukraine, which further allowed for this take over to occur. This has left Syria weakened in terms of geostrategic positioning, giving way for foreign actors strategize within their borders. These recent changes have allowed for Turkey, another regional power, to intensify their ambitions within Syria as they find themselves to be the closest ally of the new al-Sharaa Regime.

Focusing internally on Syria, al-Sharaa in the past year has participated in what was described by Professor Ocakli as a “diplomatic blitz”, meeting with officials of the United States, France, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Egypt. Considering the ties which al-Sharaa's, and other Syrian government officials, have to jihadist ideologies due to HTS' connection with Al-Qaeda, both domestic and international concessions have been, and will have to be, made if there is any hope of a united Syria under this new Regime. As al-Sharra grapples for domestic legitimacy from internal rivals, making concessions with the pertinent religious, sectarian, and ethnic groups (the Druze, Alawites, Kurds, and Christians) has shown that across the board, the varying positions of each group could ultimately threaten the possibility of a united Syria in the future.

The state of Syrian political affairs is constantly changing, and as Professor Ocakli noted at the beginning of his talk whatever occurs over the course of this semester in Syria will be crucial in understanding the future of international affairs within the Middle East. So, stay tuned to the world of international relations, and more specifically any changes in Syria.

No Kings



Cassidy Goda, 2028

The No Kings Protest in Saratoga Springs was a ton of fun. We started at campus, carrying handmade signs and chants, and marched all the way downtown, where the streets were just filled to the brim with thousands of people. Literally, everywhere you looked, people had some kind of art. I mean, there was even a *Cybertruck* covered in anti-Trump graffiti, a truck blasting digital ads against him, and even a group of people dressed up as witches holding signs that said, “Witches Believe in Democracy.” I went with all of my friends, and we were passing out pamphlets to get people to vote, and it was just insane. Honestly, we probably passed out around 200 pamphlets. It was genuinely electric and also showed a lot of hope, as everyone was there, together, to fight for democracy.

The Washington Semester Program

Brendan Lu '26

As a Washington Semester Program (WSP) Alum Spring 25, I highly encourage students to consider enrolling in the Washington Semester Program at American University. The program offers a unique opportunity to live, study, and work in Washington, D.C., while gaining firsthand experience in advocacy and Congressional work. It's a great way to build professional connections, and prepare for future careers in public service, law, international relations, and beyond.

Studying Climate Change and Environmental Justice in Ecuador, Morocco and Nepal



Cate Cochran, 2027

This semester, I'm studying abroad in Ecuador, Morocco, and Nepal through an SIT program focused on climate change and environmental justice. The program is designed to explore how different countries and regions manage water, energy, and land resources, especially in relation to their impact on local and Indigenous communities. It combines site visits to key environmental locations with conversations and collaborations involving NGOs, political activists, farmers, and community leaders.

I've really enjoyed my time in Ecuador and the time I've spent so far in Morocco. It's been an incredibly enriching experience that ties directly into my studies in political and environmental science. I also have a good amount of free time, which I've used to explore the country and our home base city!



I hope you enjoy my photos! Feel free to reach out to me at catecochran@skidmore.edu if you have any questions about the program.



The Washington Semester: fosters responsibility and opportunity

Darek Silva, 2027



Hello, Political Science Department colleagues and friends, my name is Darek Silva. I am a political science major currently studying in Washington, D.C., through the American University Washington Semester Program. I am interning at Gingrich 360, a multimedia and consulting company. I am honored to be working in the Office of the Former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, Newt Gingrich. It has been an incredible experience to learn from Speaker Gingrich, a brilliant leader and influential figure in American politics. So far, it's been more than a typical internship. The Speaker has entrusted me with important responsibilities and opportunities to contribute across a wide array of policy areas, from health and education to national security, fiscal policy, and the aerospace industry.

It has also been a distinct privilege to work for Ambassador Callista Gingrich, former U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See (Vatican) and current U.S. Ambassador to Switzerland and Liechtenstein, during the end of her tenure at the company. I've had a few remarkable months at

the company, assisting Speaker Gingrich and participating in meetings with the Majority Budget Committee staff from both the House and Senate, engaging with the Republican Communications Association, and learning directly from CEOs, senior executives, and other leading figures in think tanks and policy organizations.

I've been keeping busy in D.C., where I've worked at the U.S. Department of Commerce's International Trade Administration as a Foreign Government Procurement Intern. In this role, I engaged with world leaders and advanced U.S. business interests abroad by helping American firms compete

for government contracts. A highlight of the Washington experience was the opportunity to visit the Embassy of the Republic of Kosovo and meet Ambassador Ilir Dugolli, who addressed the importance of U.S.-Kosovo bilateral relations.

I would like to thank Professor Ron Seyb, as well as my advisors, Professors Natalie Taylor and Flagg Taylor, for their academic support, guidance, and mentorship throughout my time at Skidmore. My accomplishments are a reflection of their dedication and commitment to the success of their students. This is just the beginning of a great journey.

A research intern at Speaker Gingrich's organization, Gingrich 360, Darek Silva, contributed to this report.



NEWT GINGRICH

Mr. Gingrich, the Speaker of the House between 1995 and 1999, is the author of 42 books and chairman of Gingrich 360. For more commentary from Mr. Gingrich, visit Gingrich360.com

X (Twitter)

Hello Skidmore Political Science Newsletter



As a recent graduate of the PL department, I have been asked to share knowledge that may be useful during the transition from Skidmore to a graduate program. Since I am earning my master's at the London School of Economics in Conflict Studies and Comparative Politics, my advice might be more applicable to those who want to go abroad for their degrees. No matter your program, these are some useful tips!

The summer before your program



begins, I recommend reading at least one academic piece per month to keep yourself in the mindset for learning. Graduate school is an academically intensive experience, and it is important to have a good foundation. Though your Skidmore degree is already a great base on which to build, keeping your mind sharp is important. Comprehension skills are critical for the high volume of readings you will be expected to analyze, and the material you will read has an intense focus on methodology. Do not worry if methods are not a strength — you will soon be designing your own studies like a pro!

If I have made graduate school seem a bit intimidating, allow me to quell some of those fears with my next piece of advice. Go outside and explore! Whether you decide to study abroad or in an American city, be sure to take in all of the new sights. London is massive and each corner is full of something new to try. I understand decision fatigue can kick in with an abundance of choices,

but try to force yourself to get off campus. Even just a cute cafe and hot beverage warm the soul and help me work more efficiently.

I wish you the best of luck on your adventures in graduate school, whatever subject you intend to explore. I believe that my time at Skidmore positioned me well for the expectations of a graduate program, and I am beyond grateful to the professors who helped me get where I am. I hope my tips can help you on your path to success!

Bridget Coyer

Skidmore Class of 2025

*LSE Grad Student- Msc
Conflict Studies and
Comparative Politics*

Creative Thought Meets "The toughest job you'll ever love"

Skidmore Political Science Alums in the Peace Corps

Annabelle Winston, 2026

Figuring out what to do after graduation can be daunting, especially when seeking out something meaningful. For Jonah LeCompte ('25) and William Tone ('23), joining the Peace Corps was the answer. The Peace Corps is more than a gap year or an adventure abroad; it is a launching pad for students who are eager to get some real-world experience, making some real-world impacts.

Culture and Language

Peace Corps service is culturally and linguistically immersive. For Jonah, who has just started his service in Okahandja, Namibia, this Fall, "Training has consisted of cultural immersion, language instruction (there are 5 different languages volunteers learn in Namibia), Namibian history, and much more!"

For Will, who has been serving in San Patricio, Paraguay, since 2023, he is the only English speaker in the community and has become fluent in Spanish. He notes that his service "provides insight into how U.S. policies and programs have an impact abroad and what it means to serve as a representative of the U.S."

Both are living with host families, trying local foods, and connecting with their communities on a deeply personal level.

Personal and Professional Skill Development

Will has been serving in middle and high school, teaching sustainable agricultural practices and English to the youth of the community. He also frequently engages with parents and leads sports and other confidence-building activities. He has found that what he learned at Skidmore in the Political Science Department translates into real-world contexts in his work. Jonah is also an educational volunteer and is training to be a middle school math teacher.

Peace Corps volunteers discover firsthand why it's called "the toughest job you'll ever love." It means navigating the unexpected daily, whether adjusting to unfamiliar customs,

confronting resource limitations, or witnessing the hardships faced by the communities they serve. The demands are intense and often humbling, yet the personal growth and profound connections that come from overcoming these challenges are extremely rewarding.

Will explains that his time has "strengthened professional skills such as leadership, adaptability, and cross-cultural understanding." These skills will undoubtedly benefit them wherever they go after service.

Life After the Peace Corps

After an intensive two-year service, the Peace Corps can open opportunities for even more growth. "There are also some great benefits post-service, including 90 universities that offer between 25-100% off tuition for graduate school," says Jonah. The combination of international experience, cross-cultural fluency, and concrete professional skills can also be a huge draw for employers.

Aside from concrete professional growth, the Peace Corps is an overall transformative life experience. Not every fresh-out-of-college, twenty-something has the maturity and motivation to commit to two years in perhaps a place they never knew existed. As Jonah attests, "The Peace Corps is a great option for PL students who want to explore/understand more of the world in a way that is personal and meaningful," creating what Will describes as an "incredible" experience.

You may even find yourself enjoying guava, mango, and lemon trees just outside your window, just like Jonah.

PEACE CORPS – PARAGUAY

Will Tone '23

I have been serving in Paraguay since September 2023, in San Patricio, a rural community of 1700 residents where I am the only English speaker. My primary work has been in middle and high school teaching sustainable agricultural practices and English to the youth of the community. I also spend a lot of my time engaging the wider community especially parents of the children I teach to deepen the impact of what students are learning at school. Outside of the classroom, I work in youth development through sports and other activities that build skills and confidence. During my Peace Corps service, I have strengthened professional skills such as leadership, adaptability, and cross-cultural understanding. Additionally, being the only English speaker has also been the best way to quickly become fluent in Spanish. I believe the Peace Corps is a great option for PL students to broaden their global understanding and see how what they learn as PL students translates into real-world contexts. It also provides insight into how U.S. policies and programs have an impact abroad and what it means to serve as a representative of the U.S., even in a small rural community in Paraguay. My service will end in two months, and it has been an incredible experience.



Captions are: Dinner in Asuncion, Paraguay; My house in San Patricio, Paraguay; Students working in School Garden; Sunday lunch with my Host Family.



PEACE CORPS in Namibia

Jonah LeCompte '25



I am currently in Okahandja, Namibia, serving as an education volunteer! I have been here for just over a month now and am in the middle of my pre-service training. Training has consisted of cultural immersion, language instruction (there are 5 different languages volunteers learn in Namibia), Namibian history, and much more! For training I am living with a host family who speaks the local language I'm learning, Oshindonga. I have a guava, lemon, and mango tree in my backyard, it's the best. And in my free time I've been exploring around Okahandja with the rest of my cohort, trying lots of new food (caterpillars, kapana, pap), and hiking! Also, whenever I'm being driven around outside of town, I see giraffes, antelope, ostriches, warthogs, and other cool wildlife!

In November I will be done with training and begin teaching math to grade 8 and 9 learners in the town of Grootfontein, Namibia. Grootfontein is where I will serve for the following two years.

I think the peace corps is a great option for PL students who want to explore / understand more of the world in a way that is personal and meaningful. There are also some great benefits post service including 90 universities that offer between 25-100% off tuition for graduate school.



Traditional food I made with my Oshindonga instructor. Pap (the white porridge looking dish), spinach, and beef sausages.

Words of Wisdom from Political Science Alums

What do you wish someone had told you while you were a student at Skidmore?

Learn to write. Take hard professors who will make you a better writer. We have entered the phase where our interns (in the House of Representatives) consistently use AI to generate writing assignments and they are helpless staring at the blank page. Don't rely on AI. You pay a lot of money to have these professors rip apart your writing so let them. **Dan Miller, 2015**

1. Network! As a student, I never wanted to put people out. Now that I'm in a position to help, I realize it's not putting people out; it's networking. Seriously, kids: Call me! 2. Take a stats class. 3. Keep in touch with your professors. They are the key to your network. **Erica Seifert, 2002**

Network. Network. Network. And follow hotwalker club. **Bella Bruno, 2025**

I love when I hear from Skidmore students and alum. Don't be shy about reaching out to us;) 1. Internships are so important for getting your first job.

Do them. 2. You get jobs from networking, not from cold applying to jobs. 3. Informational interviews are everything, so know how to do one, ask effective questions, and make personal connections. And do them often when you're thinking about making a change or applying to jobs.

Sarah Saviskas, 2009

My biggest piece of advice: don't go to grad school right away. If you know

exactly what you want to do, don't go right way. If you don't know what you want to do and think grad school will help you figure it out, don't go. Work a few years, learn how to write a professional email, experience the world, save some money, and think long and hard if you need to go to grad school. And especially think about whether the job it will set you up for will be worth the amount of debt you're going into. **Emily Mangan, 2016** and graduate of Yale's public policy program.

1. Get comfortable saying "I don't know" and "I'll find out." Preferably together; 2. Learn basic troubleshooting, cut the problem in half; 3. Leaving a job or getting fired can be the best thing to happen to you. **Nick Hara, 2011**

To resist political dogma. Stand up for what you believe in even if it goes against the 99%.

Sabrina Dabakarov, 2020

It's ok to be ambitious but also pace yourself. **Nigel Smith, 2019**

Take time off and do something cool. You have the next 50 years to work, you won't be behind by taking a year off. It will be harder to take time off later. **Emily Mangan 2016** (biked across the USA)

Texting and driving. F@cking quit it and see how clear the world gets.

Beal St. George, 2014

Don't graduate. **Becky Stern, 2014**

The job you have right out of school does not need to be the job/career you stay in forever. Continue to explore what you're curious about or interested in, and don't be afraid to following that even if it leads you someplace you didn't expect to go.

Laura Swartz, 2010

Do a good job at work, but don't give your job your all. Make time for your hobbies and the people you care about. Show up to things in your community. Jobs will come and go, and not always by choice. So don't let yours be the only thing that makes your life interesting and fulfilling. **Elena Veatch, 2016**

Your major doesn't matter. I was an economics and theater double major and now I'm enrolled in a video game design master's program. Life takes wild turns and you never know where the next opportunities will come from. 2. Learn the core skills that your interests are built on. If you're pursuing science (especially social or political science) take as many math classes as you can. If you're interested in English- study philosophy and Latin. 3. Develop your relationship with AI as an educational tool. If you have environmental and political concerns, self-host your own models locally, which dramatically decreases the carbon footprint and keeps your data secure. OLLama is a great open-source model. Use it as a tutor that can assist you in learning new skills (especially coding) and discovering what you need to learn next. Don't use it to do your work for you.

Chris Iredale, 2011

The Grocery Store That Killed Communism on **the Very Special Episodes** podcast featuring *Yelena Biberman Ocakli*



In 1989, Boris Yeltsin walked into a Houston supermarket — and walked out ready to end an empire. What he saw in Texas that day would shake the foundations of the Soviet Union.

Listen to Professor Biberman on the recent episode
The Grocery Store That Killed Communism -



Thank you to **Emily Landolfi** and **Erica Stern** for taking political science majors and minors responses to our newsletter Google Form and creating such wondrous graphics.

Wow. Just wow.

The next several pages represent you, our majors and minors!

NEED MUSIC OR STREAMING SUGGESTIONS?

TAKE A LOOK AT POLI SCI STUDENTS PICKS!



TRACK LIST - FALL 2025

Abstract

Hozier

August

Taylor Swift

Manchild

Sabrina Carpenter

Plainsong

The Cure

Gattini

Stain the Canvas

Dare

Gorillaz

You Should Probably Leave

Chris Stapleton

Bowling Alley

Audrey Hobert

Back to Friends

Sombr

Sunshine

OneRepublic

Strawberries & Cigarettes

Troye Sivan

Acquiesce

Oasis

Stateside

PinkPantheress

Mad

Renee Rapp

Hardlight

Spacey Jane

Mr. Eclectic

Laufey

3AM

DRAMA

Wishing for a Hero

Polo G

Dry Town

Gillian Welch

Light On

Maggie Rogers

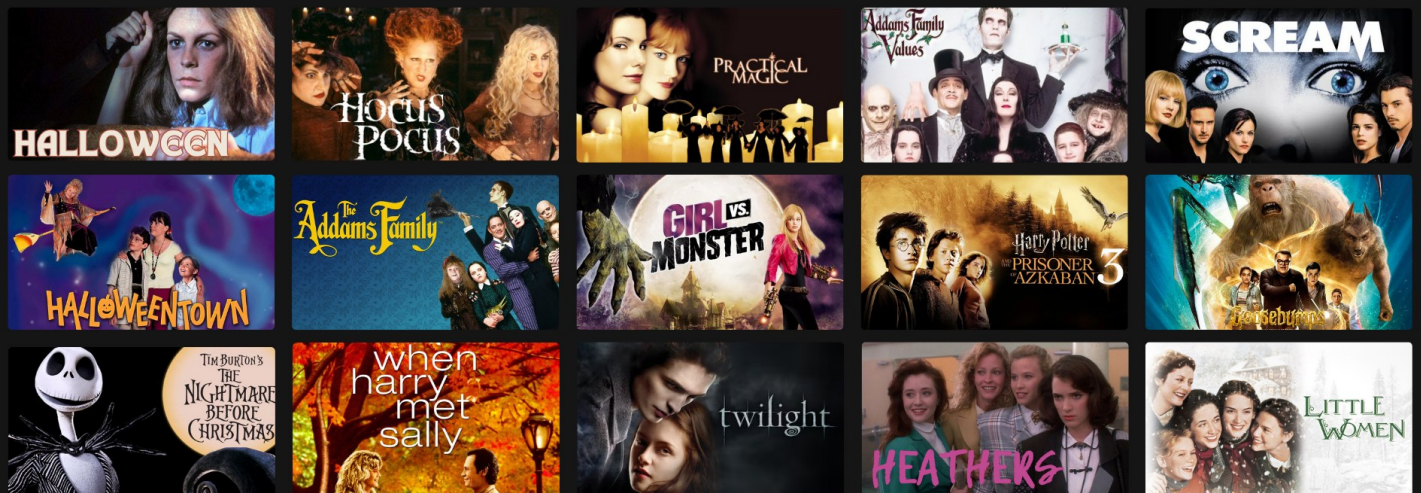
The Political Science Department does not endorse or support any of the following content. It is entirely based on individual student recommendations.

PL PICKS

We Asked, You Answered.

Movies > Skidmore Spooky Szn

Your Go-Tos for Fall



WHO ARE YOU GETTING COFFEE WITH AT The Poli Sci Cafe?



GEORGE WASHINGTON
MARSHA P. JOHNSON
JOAN BAEZ

PETE BUTTIGIEG
ZOHAN MAMDANI
KARL MARX

KAMALA HARRIS
SACAGAWEA
NANCY PELOSI

ELIZABETH I
THEODORE ROOSEVELT
KENNETH WALTZ

JOHN F. KENNEDY
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN
ALEXANDRIA OCASIO-CORTEZ

JOHN LOCKE
BARACK OBAMA

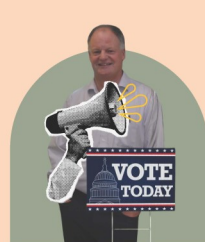
PL CLASSES WE'RE LOOKING FOWARD TO!



U.S. Presidency
w/ Prof. Thal



Horror of International
Politics w/ Prof. Graney



Real Democracy & Senior
Coda w/ Prof. Turner



Constitutional Law
w/ Prof. Breslin



Hip Hop, Politics & Protest w/
Prof. Balogun



Campaigns & Elections
w/ Prof. Morrow



Intro to Political Philosophy w/ Prof. Sehnert



**Middle Eastern Politics
w/ Prof. Ocakli**



Politics of Modern Warfare w/ Prof. Biberman

WHAT PL STUDENTS DID THIS SUMMER

Administrative coordinator at law firm

**Intern at
advertising
agency**

**Intern at NYS
Democratic
Committee
Financial District**

Startupbootcamp in Amsterdam

Intern at consulting firm in NYC

**Intern for
City Council
member**

**Summer Legal
Fellow at
Albany Law
School's Govt.
Law center.**

NYS park worker

***Intern at Saratoga
Immigration Coalition***

Camp counselor

**Lifeguard w/
DCR in Boston,
MA**

**Business
analyst intern a
RxSense**

Worker at a loge in New Hampshire

**Intern at Mount Sina
Neuro research lab**

Waiter/server

**Research intern
w/ ABA Standing
Committee on
Law and National
Security**

***RA in Skidmore
Chemistry Dept.***

**Assistant at
Skidmore Office
of Special
Programs**

**Intern for Mayors
Fund to
Advance NYC**

Intern at finance department at City Hall

Skidmore admissions worker

Intern at Mann Law Firm

Study Abroad Experiences & Advice



London, England

“I studied abroad this past Spring in London. It was amazing! I took a British politics class which was super interesting, and I learned a lot about the history of politics in Britain and the UK. To anyone who is thinking about studying abroad, I say: go for it! It's a phenomenal experience that really broadens your worldview.” ~Abigail Scifres



Santiago, Chile

I am studying in Santiago de Chile with IFSA. It has been so wonderful--my host family and classes are just amazing! Chile is such a fascinating country to explore as a PL major, especially as we have the Presidential elections coming up in November. My advice is that everyone should study abroad in South America!!! ~Annie Obrecht



Copenhagen, Denmark

“I studied at DIS, Copenhagen Fall 2024. It was AMAZING. I highly recommend. I took a class on the formation of the European Union and learned about the different political systems in Europe.” ~*Lila Glanville '26*



Florence, Italy

“I just got back (Spring 2025) from Florence, Italy, and had the time of my life. In Italy, the military presence is more noticeable, and the locals are more conservative as they age, but not wildly different from America, especially right now.” ~*Natalie O'Neill '26*



Cardiff, Wales

“I attended the Royal Welsh College for Music and Drama in the Spring. My advice for those studying abroad is pack American Medicine. While I didn't attend political science classes, I had many conversations surrounding politics; the United States is certainly a laughing stock to many--even in countries undoubtedly facing similar issues.”

~*Anne Huffines '26*



Poli Sci's Fall BUCKET LIST



APPLE PICK



DRINK APPLE
CIDER



MAKE PIE/
DESSERTS



HALLOWEEN
MOVIES



CONTINUE
INTERSHIP



SKID DEMS
EVENTS



EAT APPLE
CIDER DONUTS



GO TO HOT AIR
BALLOON FESTIVAL



DECORATE
APARTMENT



GO TO LAKE W/
SAILING CLUB



MACHU
PICCHU



DRIVE TO SEE
FALL FOLIAGE



HIKE



BIG SHOW



SEE LORDE IN
MONTREAL



GO ON A
HAY RIDE



GO TO HAUNTED
CORN MAZE



CARVE
PUMPKINS



WRITE MUSIC



GO TO FARMERS'
MARKET



HAUNTED
HOUSE



DRESS UP FOR
HALLOWEEN



TAKE A TRIP
TO VERMONT



BLOCK PARTY

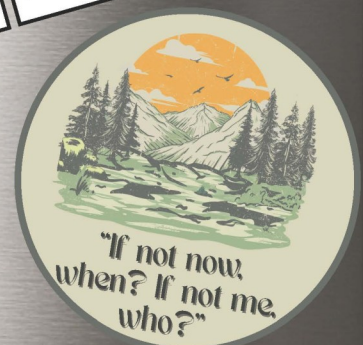
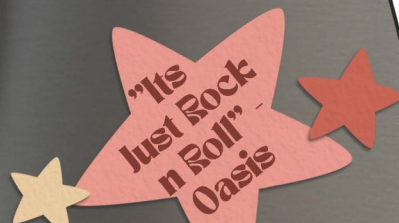
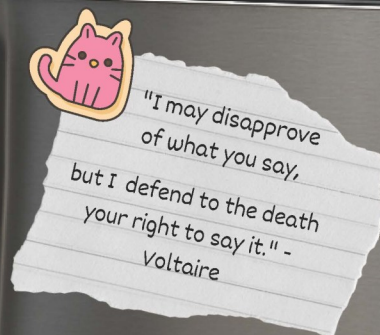
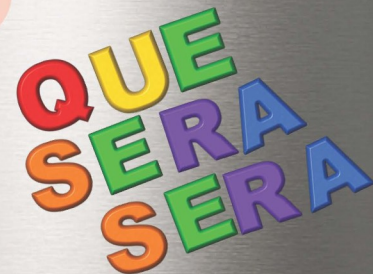
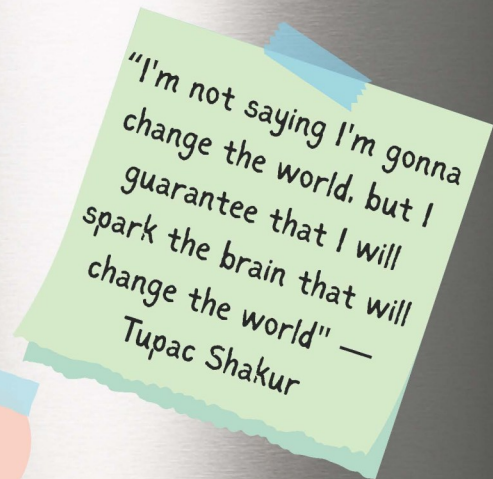
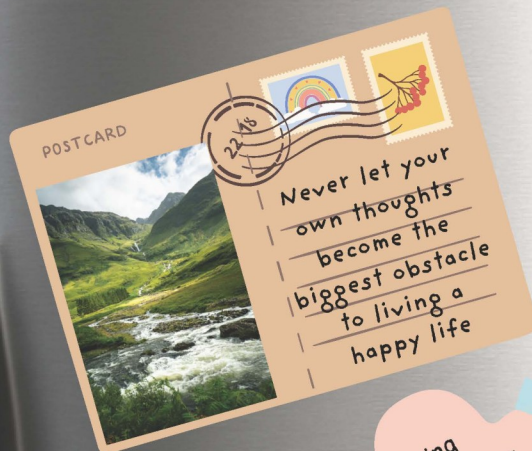


GO TO
CLASSES



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what inspirational quote do you **LIVE BY?**



POLITICAL SCIENCE SENIOR CODA SPRING 2026

The Political Science Senior Coda helps you integrate your first three years of classroom learning as a Political Science major and your other experiences at Skidmore while at the same time helping you to begin thinking about your life after Skidmore. This course is a moment for you, together with other senior PL majors, to simultaneously reflect on your academic past and path at Skidmore, while also thinking about how you want to move into the future, past Skidmore.



As you plan your schedules for next semester, a couple of upcoming courses fulfill All College requirements in the spring and next fall. If you have questions, talk to your advisor or email me or Prof. Graney. *Prof. Chris Mann*

BRIDGE EXPERIENCE - Spring 2026

PL223 - Voting in the United States [Prof. Mann] - An exploration of how elections are run in the United States. Students will examine the state and federal laws and regulations governing the conduct of elections, the way local election officials administer elections, and proposals for reforming voter registration and how voters cast ballots in local, state, and national elections. *'Bonus content' for 2026: Learn to debunk misinformation about elections to help protect U.S. democracy!*

PL244 - Race, State and Nation in Comparative Perspective [Prof. Graney] - An examination of how the wielding of political power and ideas about justice have shaped the experiences of people with different racial identities in three countries: the US, Brazil and South Africa. Students will come to understand how white supremacy was used historically as the basis of state and nation-building in these three states and how BIPOC and white citizens have challenged white supremacy and fought for more inclusive and democratic forms of nation-statehood in these three cases, up to and including the contemporary moment.

Additional Bridge Experience courses TBD for Fall 2026.

AQR Requirement - Fall 2026

PL 202 - Introduction to Political Research [Prof. Mann] -

An introduction of the wide range of research approaches used by political scientists to study American, comparative, and international politics. The purpose of this course is to make all other PL courses easier by explaining research design and analysis used in political science. *IMHO - The course is the most useful way of fulfilling the AQR requirement for PL majors.*

Political Science Topics Course Descriptions - Spring 2026

PL 251 – American Public Opinion Kristen Morrow

An exploration of what opinions are and how they are formed, what factors do and do not influence opinion development and change, and how opinions drive citizens' political thinking and behavior. The course addresses the impact of public opinion on a variety of institutions as well as the relationship between the public and key political actors. Research will involve learning to collect and analyze public opinion data in real time.
3 credits



PL351 - 20th-Century Radical Political Thought

Benjamin Sehnert



Radical politics is typically associated with Leftist political movements such as Marxism, feminism, anti-racism, anti-colonialism, etc. This course investigates one source of radical political thinking --- French existentialist philosophy. We will explore how ideas about the meaning of freedom, oppression, and personal identity extend to new questions and movements (such as "second-wave feminists" and the Black Power Movement) in France, the U.S., and

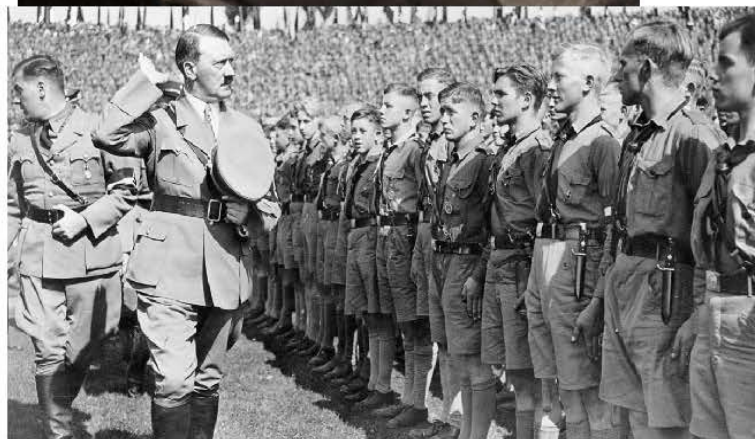
beyond. By looking to French existentialist thought, our aim will be to question how this philosophical heritage shapes our thinking about the radical politics of race, gender, and class in the present. 4 credits





PL251 - Hannah Arendt: Confronting Totalitarianism **Benjamin Sehnert**

In her analysis of totalitarian regimes, the political philosopher Hannah Arendt identified various factors that “crystallized” into totalitarianism, including social isolation, expansionist capitalism, the failure of human rights ideology, and groupthink. This course focuses upon Arendt’s analysis of totalitarianism as well as her dialogue with other thinkers concerning Nazism, fascism, and communism. Additionally, we will consider the recent interest in Arendt as a response to the rise of illiberalism in the West as well as Arendt’s discussion of revolutionary political activity as a potential cure for totalitarian tendencies. 3 credits



PL 332 – The American Party System **Kristen Morrow**

An examination of the influence of our political parties at critical moments of the formation of the American democracy. The course explores how political parties emerged almost immediately after the ratification of the Constitution and engaged in public debate on the meaning of republican government as well as the meaning of citizen participation and representation. Students will learn to appreciate the distinction between American political development and the historical study of politics. They will also become familiar with party realignment and be able to recognize the unique character of the elections of 1800, 1828, 1860, 1896, and 1932. Students will also learn to appreciate the challenge of finding the appropriate role for political parties in our democracy. 4 credits.



PL 365 – Politics of Global Health Emmanuel Balogun

An examination of global health governance from a comparative perspective. Students will study public health systems in different political contexts and study the complex interactions and nuanced policy decisions necessary to address global health.



This course will deepen student understanding of the social and political determinants of health, the role of private actors in health governance (e.g., pharmaceutical companies, nonprofits, and individuals); the complexity of health policy implementation; and the universal challenges of promoting health access and equity.
4 credits

It has been a busy Fall semester.

Thank you for reading our newsletter.

AMERICAN POLITICS

PL 101: INTRO TO AMERICAN POLITICS

BEAU BRESLIN, KRISTEN MORROW, ADAM THAL

PL 223: VOTING IN THE US: ACCESS, FAIRNESS AND REFORM *CHRIS MANN*

PL 251: AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION *KRISTEN MORROW*

PL 314: CIVIL LIBERTIES *BEAU BRESLIN*

PL 332: THE AMERICAN PARTY SYSTEM *KRISTEN MORROW*

PL 362: POLITICS OF CONGRESS *ADAM THAL*

PL 376: SENIOR CODA *KATE GRANEY*

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

PL 103: INTRO TO INTERNATIONAL AND COMPARATIVE POLITICS *KATE GRANEY, YELENA BIBERMAN-OCAKLI*

PL 226: STATES, REBELS, AND WARLORDS *YELENA BIBERMAN-OCAKLI*

PL 343: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS OF THE GLOBAL SOUTH *EMMANUEL BALOGUN*

POLITICAL SCIENCE COURSES

SPRING 2026

COMPARATIVE POLITICS

PL 233: POLITICAL ISLAM *FERYAZ OCAKLI*

PL 244: RACE, STATE, AND NATION IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE *KATE GRANEY*

PL 348: POLITICS OF MODERN SOUTH ASIA *YELENA BIBERMAN-OCAKLI*

PL 365: POLITICS OF GLOBAL HEALTH *EMMANUEL BALOGUN*

POLITICAL THEORY

PL 102: INTRO TO POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

PL 251: HANNAH ARENDT: CONFRONTING TOTALITARIANISM

PL 351: 20TH CENTURY RADICAL POLITICAL THOUGHT *BENJAMIN SEHNERT*

PL-HI 322: THE HISTORY & POLITICAL THOUGHT OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION *NATALIE TAYLOR & TILLMAN NECHTMAN*