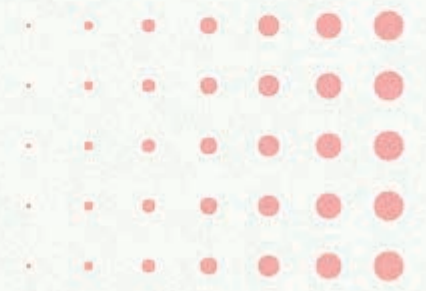


UCI POLITICAL SCIENCE · DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER



WELCOME TO THE

# Newsletter



## Letter from the Department Chair



As the academic year draws to a close, we pause to reflect on what an extraordinary chapter it has been for our department. Our faculty and students continue to distinguish themselves in ways that make us immensely proud.

Among countless accolades, a few stand out: Etel Solingen was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences — a remarkable honor and well-deserved recognition of a lifetime of scholarly achievement; Jeff Kopstein was honored as a Chancellor’s Professor; and Danielle Thomsen published in the *American Political Science Review*, our discipline’s flagship journal. We also congratulate Shawn Rosenberg, a distinguished colleague, who recently announced his retirement after 44 years on the UCI faculty.

Meanwhile, our undergraduate community flourished, with majors up 20% and enrollments up 30%. Our students bring energy and ingenuity to our classroom - and beyond. Seven of our doctoral students completed their PhDs this year. Their innovative scholarship earned this extraordinary distinction, and we are so proud of them all.

A special thank you to the Political Science Executive Committee, especially Shahin Amos, Gabe Mutsvangwa, and Addison O’Rourke, who contributed so much to “make a thing a thing.” Your energy, enthusiasm, and interest in politics are infectious, and we are grateful for all you have done to enliven departmental life and deepen our engagement with the political world... and each other.

To everyone in our community — faculty, students, and staff — I wish you a restful and/or productive summer. I look forward to seeing you all back in the fall, ready for whatever new chapter awaits us.

- Sara Goodman, Professor of Political Science



# Faculty News

## AWARDS AND HONORS

**Heidi Hardt:** external grant from the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA)

**Erin Lockwood:** named one of six inaugural Roosevelt Institute Good Life Residents (Federal Reserve Cohort), Good Authority Fellowship

**Constantine Manda:** Advancing Research Grants for Early Career Scholars (APSA)

**Kristen Monroe:** Newkirk Fellowship, APSA's Hazel Gaudet Erskine Career Achievement Award for Outstanding Work in Political Psychology

**Pamela Nwakanma:** 2026 Social Science Assistant Professor Research Award

**Etel Solingen:** Elected Fellow to the American Academy of Arts & Sciences

**Samantha Vortherms:** 2026 Social Science Associate Professor Research Award

## HIGHLIGHTED PUBLICATIONS

**Cecelia Lynch, Emeritus:** Co-Guest Editor, Special issue, "Humanitarian Relationships and the Reinvention of Africa's Futures," *Global Africa*, N.12, December 2025. ; Cecelia Lynch, "Rocking Beyond IR: A Way of Thinking About Relationality, Meaning, and Power," *International Studies Review*, forum on "Relational Voices in IR," 28 (3) June 2026.

**Danielle Thomsen:** "Legislative Effectiveness, Progressive Ambition, and Electoral Success," with Sarah Treul, Craig Volden, and Alan E. Wiseman. *American Political Science Review*.

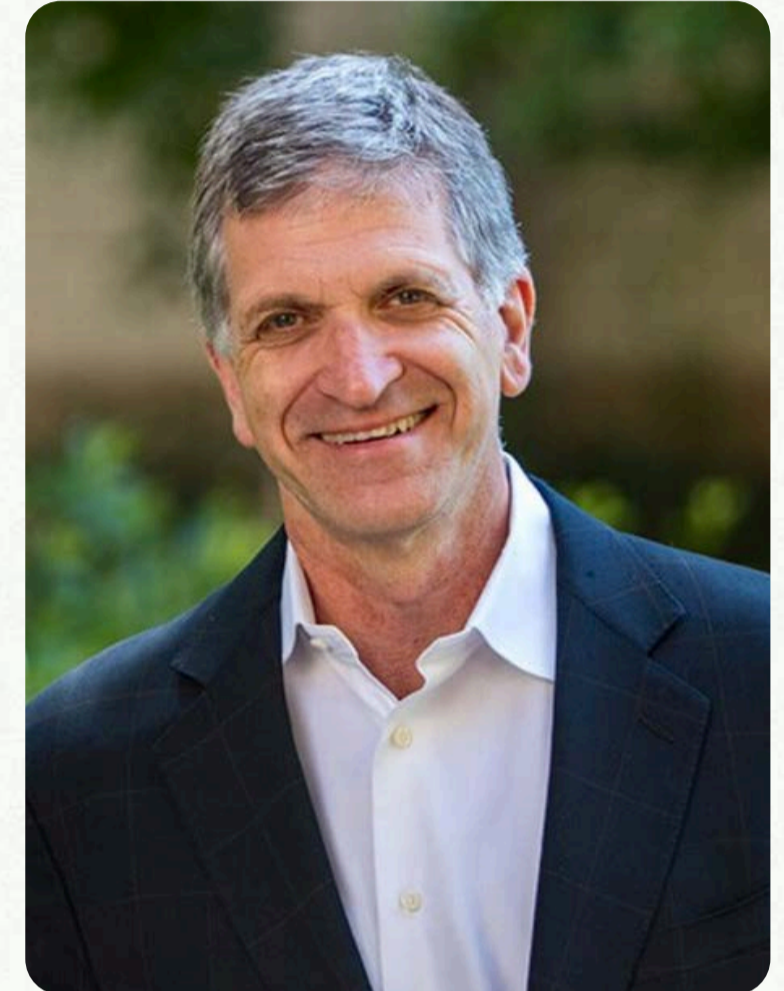
**Samantha Vortherms:** "Decoupling or business as usual? How Japanese multinational corporations adapt to political risk in China," with Timothy Cichanowicz and Jiakun Jack Zhang. *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 26(1)

## OTHER ACTIVITIES

**Jeff Kopstein (right):** “We Tried Fuzzy Borders in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. It Didn’t Go Well Then, Either.” New York Times. Link [here](#)

**Erin Lockwood (below right):** Commentary in Project Syndicate - “The Limits of Prediction Markets.” Link [here](#)

**Cecelia Lynch (below left):** Presented at a plenary panel in Dakar, Senegal, in December (2025) to discuss how to “Financer l’aide publique au développement et la recherche après le Compromis de Séville.”



# Graduate Student Update

## JOBS AND POSTDOCS

**Ana Schugurensky:** Accepted a tenure-track Assistant Professor position in Political Science at CSU Long Beach

**Will Kidd:** Postdoc, Taubman Center for American Politics and Policy, Brown University

**Geidy Mendez:** US Census

## AWARDS

**Hana Abdulla**

- APSA Diversity Fellowship Program, Spring Fellow

**Pharrell Allen** (pictured right, with Prof. Brunstetter)

- Easton Prize Fellowship (Department of Political Science),

**Amy Gilmore**

- James N. Danziger Award (Department of Political Science)

**Hunter Hilinski**

- dissertation fellowship at the Berlin Program for Advanced German and European Studies (Freie Universität Berlin)

**Joshua Stom**

- Newcombe Doctoral Dissertation Fellowships - Charlotte W. Newcombe Foundation
- Eckstein Scholar (Department of Political Science)

**Sweta Rijal**

- Christine Mirzayan Science and Technology Policy Graduate Fellowship at the National Academies of Sciences

**Giovanna Itzel** (pictured right)

- 2026 UC HSI DDI President's Pre-Professoriate Fellowship Award
- 2026 CSU Pre-Professor Program (PREPP)
- 2026 California Community College Fellowship
- 2026 Latine Excellence and Achievement Award



# GRADUATE PUBLICATIONS

## Amy Gilmore

- Manning Humanitarian Programs: The Impossible Bargain of Refugee Men. Published in *Gender and Politics* Sept 2025.
- Co-Author: Humanitarian Diversion in Afghanistan. Published by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction in August 2025.

## Giovanna Itzel

- Nguyen, Christine T., Giovanna Itzel, José Jesus Gutiérrez, Denise D. Payán, Laura E. Enriquez, and Matthew J. Landry. 2026. "Multi-level Factors Influencing College Campus Basic Needs Service Utilization: A Focus on Latino/a/x Immigration-Impacted Students in California." *Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities*.
- Itzel, Giovanna, Laura E. Enriquez, Denise D. Payán, and Matthew J. Landry. 2025. "Low-Income and Legally Vulnerable: Immigration-Impacted Latino Students' Perceived Barriers to Accessing Essential Needs Resources at a Hispanic-Serving Institution." *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*.
- Enriquez, Laura E., Giovanna Itzel, and Jennifer C. Perez Lopez. [Forthcoming. Submitted R&R]. "Collective Care and Methodological Carework: A Framework for Healing-Centered Research with Immigration-Impacted Latinx Communities." *Sociological Perspectives*.

## Mohammad Amaan Siddiqui

- "The Iran War and the Noncitizen Question in the GCC: Policy Lessons and Reform Pathways Beyond Talent Attraction"
- Siddiqui, Mohammad Amaan. 2025. "Beyond Hashtags: Understanding the Perceptions and Impact of Online Feminism among Young Instagram and Twitter Users in the UAE." *Journal of Arabian Studies* 15 (2): 296–322.

## Jacob Sutherland

- *Journal of Political Science Education* article: "Grads Teach Grads: Student-Led Workshops to Complement Department Graduate Methods Offerings." With Alisson Rowland, Ryan Mundy, and Elane Westfaul.



# Undergraduate News

# Congratulations!

## SCHOOL AWARDS

**Daniel Purri**, Black Lives Matter Research Scholarship recipient

**Victoria Alejandra Serra**, Alice B. Macy Award for Outstanding Undergraduate Research.

**Cocoa Young-Perez**, Donald A. Strauss Scholarship for Public Service

**Jessica Zhang**, Justice and Equity Research Paper Award

**Kalia Miller**, Moore Family Endowment Fund Scholarship

Order of Merit recipients, a distinction given to the top 2% of social sciences undergraduate students who best exemplify a commitment to academic distinction: **Austin Pierce, Jack Wever, Mahteme Legesse, Mina Shin, Nadia Mansour**

## ...AND CONGRATS TO

**Rocio Celeste Rivera**, commencement speaker

**Arun Prakash Malani, Mina Shin, and Jessica Jia Zhang**, recipients of the Chancellor's Award of Distinction, acknowledging UCI's most outstanding graduating seniors, awarded by the UC Irvine Alumni Association (3 of the 4 recipients from the School of Social Sciences were Poli Sci majors)

# Undergraduate Spotlights

## Shayne Gray: Passion For Photography

During my time as a UCI Political Science student, I became intrigued by power, people, and... photography.

“I was there, and this is what I saw.” The simple phrase from Camera Lucida captured my love of photography. During the January protests after Renée Good was killed, I went to Santa Ana with students from UCI and CSULB. I saw an older couple come out to watch one generation’s protest, and I saw another generation’s willingness to listen. I was there, and this is what I saw.



## Nancie Huang-Ball: My First Course... as a Professor

If you told freshman-year me that by graduation I'd have taught my own course, I would have laughed and asked whether that happened before or after I stopped getting lost around campus. Yet, in my last quarter, I said goodbye to 20 students after teaching my own course on privacy rights.

A huge thank you to Professors Beckmann and Dandamudi for their mentorship in helping me bring my dream to life and experience college from the other side of the classroom! If any other undergraduate students are passionate about teaching a particular niche, check out UCI's [UTeach](#) program.





## Jacob Douglas Speciale on Toqueville's "Democratic Despotism"

Learning about Toqueville's "democratic despotism" was an "ah-ha!" moment. The idea is that democratic citizens often defer to majority sentiment, which is often imbued as legitimate.

This lesson gave me a greater appreciation for the complexity of American democracy and conveyed the importance of local government and communities. It also reminded me that in a democracy, it is important for each individual to think critically and act deliberately.

## Ria Srivastava: Lessons for Life

I took Professor Rosenberg's Political Ideology course at a moment where campus speech controversies were dominating headlines. Dr. Rosenberg taught us to welcome political disagreement and, even more, to engage with one another with candor and civility.

The lesson quickly proved valuable. During my fellowship at Young Invincibles, one of the nation's largest youth advocacy organizations, I helped arrange a meeting with state Senator Tony Strickland, whose politics differ from my own. I arrived prepared but nervous. Those nerves quickly faded. Strickland's staff modeled the sort of dialogue I had learned, and the conversation was productive and friendly. The experience reinforced Professor Rosenberg's lesson: political labels often obscure the complexity of people's views, and meaningful progress requires engaging across differences rather than retreating from them.





## Rocio Riveria, Anteater Who Answers

It's true what they say: democracy really is for and by the people. Interning in Washington, DC, I listened to hundreds of people who took the time to pick up the phone and call their senator. From immigration casework requests to comments on foreign policy and Capitol tour requests, each call was passionate and purposeful, giving me hope amid political uncertainty. It was an honor to be one small part of the democratic process. The lesson I learned: when people raise their voices (and votes), they will be heard.

## Daria Podolsky's Questions

Professor Bilakovics's "Justice" course changed how I think about politics, for one, but also about my own life. After studying enduring questions about morality, justice, and the "good life," the insight that sticks with me is the importance of stepping back from the daily grind to consider foundational questions: What goals do I find worth pursuing? What features make my life fulfilling? What values should I prioritize in this situation? Thank you, Professor Bilakovics, for helping me develop a deeper appreciation for not only what I believe, but why I believe it, and how I can apply that knowledge throughout my life.



## Benji Forman-Barzilai's Little Lie and Big Truth

Professor Davin Phoenix's Mass Media course included an intriguing multi-week project: create a believable piece of fake news. I made up a story on Boeing's treatment of a whistleblower, turning a few true unresolved threads into a full-fledged conspiracy narrative while copying CNN's online interface and prose style. A key insight was that the most damaging misinformation isn't necessarily a "big lie;" all it takes to launch an alternate reality is a small, key misdirection that, when placed in the factual context of a situation, can reframe it to support a false conclusion.



## Evalyn An Le, Thinking and Writing

Professor Jeffrey Kopstein's course, Antisemitism, taught me a lot about politics, history, and humanity. It also taught me how to research complex historical periods. In his upper-division writing class, Dr. Kopstein challenged each student to write weekly 600-word essays. When comparing my writing to my classmates' during peer-review sessions, I often worried that my drafts fell short. But with consistent encouragement and advice, Professor Kopstein challenged me to critically synthesize the readings and confidently elevate my own analytical voice. The classes I took with him were not just a catalyst for my interest in political science; they also improved my thinking and writing.



## Hannah Byng, OC in DC

During my time in Washington, D.C., I learned about lawmaking. Back home in Orange County, I learned why access matters just as much as action. Good policy can open doors, but only if people can walk through them. Seeing both sides of public service from Capitol Hill to my own community taught me that effective advocacy requires more than passing legislation. It requires turning policy into meaningful impact. That lesson reinforced my commitment to public service and a career dedicated to bridging the gap between government and the communities it serves.



## Maya Estrada and the AI in UCI

Professor Beckmann's US Presidency course included a quarter-long research project using AI. After students found CQ Almanac articles detailing the legislative history for specific bills, partners then used an AI protocol to turn the details into data. Using these new data, each student tested their own hypothesis about the essence of presidential success and failure in Congress.

I tested whether proposals presidents made during campaigns were more likely to become law than other priorities. The answer: not really. It turns out congressional composition is more important than campaign commitments for predicting presidential success in Congress.



## Dorsa Khatibloo at the LA District Attorney's Office

An internship I completed this year was as a law clerk with the Los Angeles District Attorney's Office in the Organized Crime Unit in which I was assigned a staggering gang homicide case. In regards to my overarching assignment, my daily tasks consisted of court appearances with my supervising prosecutor alongside evidence briefings, outlines, timelines, and transcriptions. I was also entrusted with reviewing large volumes of evidence and occasionally accompanied prosecutors and investigators to federal correctional facilities to verify information relevant to the case.

What will stay with me most is the realization that criminal prosecutions are built upon countless hours of preparation behind the scenes. While courtroom proceedings often receive the most attention, I learned that successful prosecutions depend upon meticulous evidence review, organization, and collaboration among attorneys, investigators, and support staff.



## Jack Wever, profiling Professor Lockwood's forthcoming book

How can democratic accountability survive when crisis-prone financial markets wield enormous power through expertise most people cannot evaluate? Dr. Lockwood argues that finance derives much of its influence from claims of complexity. By convincing regulators and the public that its inner workings are too difficult to understand, the industry secures deference while accumulating both wealth and risk.

But Lockwood she rejects the idea that ordinary people are incapable of understanding what finance does. Most people already grasp the basic reality: many of these bewildering, quasi-fictional products exist to turn capital into more capital, enriching investors while periodically destabilizing the broader economy.

For Lockwood, complexity should never become an excuse to hand over democratic control. The larger challenge is to rethink what financial markets are for, judging them not only by growth and profit, but by whether they advance broader public goals such as equity, sustainability, affordability, and productive investment.



Hats off to all our students who thrived in our classes and went the extra mile by participating in various outside-the-classroom opportunities UCI offers, including UCDC, UC Sacramento, study abroad, DDI, UROP, U-Teach, the Political Science Executive Committee, the honors program, and beyond. Your initiative showcases the learning and personal growth that takes place beyond textbooks and chatbots. And, while we're at it, thanks to the faculty and staff who dedicate themselves to making these opportunities possible.

– Professor Daniel Brunstetter