



## Department of Political Science

Columbian College of Arts and Sciences



## INSIDE THE ISSUE

- 2** Note from the Chair
- 3** 2019 Undergraduate Interns
- 4–5** Spotlight on Faculty

- 6** Student Awards, News and Alumni Outcomes
- 7** Thank You to Our Donors

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## NOTE FROM THE CHAIR

The fall semester has flown by in a hurry. Not only did we enroll a new batch of graduate students, register many new undergraduate majors, and welcome back our hundreds of already declared majors, we were also delighted to have four new assistant professors join our faculty.

We continue to build toward the future with three new faculty searches in American politics and international relations. We have enjoyed excellent job talks and meetings with the finalists for these positions and look forward to having a few of them join our faculty next year.

And we also have new faces in our front office: Sam Stiver is our new department supervisor and Nakisa Azizi is our new department administrator.

We hope your fall was also full of new opportunities, and wish you all the best in the year ahead.

**Bruce Dickson, PhD**  
Department Chair

# 2019 Undergraduate Interns

Learn how some of our undergraduates spent the year

## Zachary Brumback

Bachelor of Arts, 2020

The Office of the United States Senate

Majority Leader, Senator Mitch McConnell

"Over the Spring 2019 semester, I was honored to serve as a congressional intern for Senator Mitch McConnell. Participating in our government's political process through this internship allowed me to receive valuable exposure that I could otherwise not obtain as just a university student. My favorite memories include watching votes occur from the Leader's Gallery Box, interacting with various members of Congress, and attending the Proposal to Establish a United States Space Force hearing."



## Jazmin Kay

Bachelor of Arts, 2019

The Office of the United States House of Representatives with Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi

"This past spring, I had the privilege of interning for Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi. What made this internship special was the feeling of being a part of history, serving the first female Speaker of the House during the first months of the 116th Congress which ushered in the most diverse class of Congress ever. I also was the first-ever Digital Intern, where I worked on communicating the priorities and actions of the Speaker to the public. The most memorable moment of my internship was attending the State of the Union address from the House Chamber."

## Qiuyang (Marx) Wang

Bachelor of Arts, 2020

Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS)

"Over the summer, I worked as a Research Intern with the Freeman Chair in China Studies at CSIS. My favorite moments of this experience included attending internal meetings with top scholars in the field of US-China relations, drafting blog posts and memos on the most pressing topics related to China under the guidance of full-time experts of the Freeman Chair, and interacting with my knowledgeable and supportive colleagues through meaningful discussions. I had the invaluable opportunity of applying theories learned from courses offered by the incredible faculty of GW's Department of Political Science to actual policy issues."

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# Spotlight on Faculty

Welcome to our new faculty! Enjoy reading about them below.



**Fiona Cunningham**

Assistant Professor

Fiona's research interests lie at the intersection of technology and conflict, with an empirical focus on China. Her current book project explains how and why states use space, cyber and conventional missile weapons as substitutes for threats to use nuclear weapons for coercion in limited wars.

For the fall term, Fiona taught courses on International Security Politics and Coercion in Peacetime and War.



**Omar García-Ponce**

Assistant Professor

Omar's research focuses on the political economy of conflict and development, with an emphasis on topics related to crime and violence, institutional development, and political behavior. His most recent project investigates cycles of retributive violence in the context of Mexico's drug war.

**Q: What made you interested in political science?**

Growing up amidst Mexico's transition to democracy definitely influenced my interest in the study of politics. During my undergraduate studies, I developed a research interest in understanding how historical processes—and in particular episodes of violence in history—influence people's behavior and shape the development of political and economic institutions.

**Q: What are your academic plans as we head into the new spring semester?**

I will be teaching two classes in spring. One of them is on the political economy of conflict and development in which we examine the political and economic roots of armed violence in the developing world. The other course is about contemporary US-Mexico relations and I'm very excited about it. Many relevant policy issues will be covered in class and I hope students find these topics engaging.

**Q: What are some fun facts about yourself?**

I write fiction in Spanish and I'm a very bad guitar player.

## FACULTY ACCOLADES

- **Steven Balla** authored "Are mass comment campaigns an abuse of the rulemaking process?" for The Hill.
- **Sarah Binder** was quoted by PolitiFact in the articles "Nancy Pelosi overstates Republican gains in impeachment process" and "Steil errs comparing Trump to Clinton, Nixon impeachments."
- **Eric Kramon** won best book award for *Money for Votes: The Causes and Consequences of Electoral Clientelism in Africa* of APSA's 2019 African Politics Conference Group
- **Eric Lawrence**: newly named by CCAS as the Outstanding Director of Graduate Study
- **Chris Warshaw** and John Sides received a Russell Sage Foundation grant for their study "Inequalities in Participation, Voting and Representation in Local Governments."



**Janet I. Lewis**  
Assistant Professor

Janet's research interest centers on political violence. Her area of focus is Africa, and she just finished a book project about rebel group formation.

**Q: What made you interested in teaching political science?**

I love both research and teaching, so being a professor is fantastic for me because I get to do both.

**(Janet I. Lewis continued)**

**Q: What are your academic plans as we head into the new spring semester?**

I'll be teaching Political Violence at the undergrad and PhD level. On the research side, I'm working on two projects: One focuses on why different state-level conditions often lead to different forms of political violence. The other examines how news and beliefs spreads through word-of-mouth networks in rural contexts.

**Q: What is the most effective method that you advise students on to become active learners?**

I remind my students that they live in a highly dynamic world and it's hard to predict where precisely their careers will take them. Therefore, in college, they should focus on building broadly-applicable skills in critical thinking, reading, writing, working with data, and more generally, learning how to learn effectively.

**Q: A fun fact that you would like your student to know about yourself?**

I love to play team sports, and played rugby in college



**Lucia Rafanelli**  
Assistant Professor

Lucia's research interests explore contemporary political theory; theories of human rights and global justice; and collective personhood. She also has a side interest in ethics and artificial intelligence. This fall she taught Global Justice.

**Q: What inspired you to become a political science professor?**

I think examining the moral questions raised by contemporary political issues is not only intellectually stimulating and challenging, but also critically important. I'm very lucky to work in a profession that allows me to dedicate my energy to this task.

**Q: What is your teaching philosophy?**

Studying political theory means learning how to conscientiously address political and ethical questions we all face regularly. As I lecture or lead classroom discussions, I frame my questions and observations by relating them to current and historical events, and to actual political issues on which students may be called to pass judgment—such as immigration, humanitarian intervention, and trade globalization. In so doing, I hope not only to introduce students to the literature in academic political theory, but also to open up to them a new way of looking at the world and their place in it.

**Q: What is something interesting you've learned about GW since arriving?**

The legend of the "river horse."



## Student Awards and News

Political Science celebrates the hard work of all our students!



**Ahmed Kodouda**  
PhD Candidate

Ahmed was awarded fellowship from the National Science Foundation (Graduate research Fellowship) and the American Political Science Foundation (Minority Fellowship) in 2019. Kodouda's research focuses on post colonial civil wars with a special focus on Sub-Saharan Africa

**Elizabeth Meehan**  
PhD Candidate

Elizabeth (Bit) was awarded the National Science Foundation's Graduate Research Fellowship in 2019. As an NSF fellow, Meehan is examining European Union laws regulating beneficial ownership while collecting data on how the legal loopholes benefit tax evasion schemes.



## MAKING HEADLINES



**Gavin Derleth**

GW senior double-majoring in political science and geography plans to quantify and analyze the impact of gentrification on DC neighborhoods and members of the local community.

"Undergraduate Researcher Aims to Map Gentrification in DC," featured in *GW Today*

## Undergraduate Career Paths

Recent undergraduate alumni have gone onto careers at:

- Adaptive Biotechnologies
- Bloomberg
- Boeing
- Campaign Legal Center
- Cato Institute
- Center for the Study of Social Policy
- Children's Law Center
- Deloitte
- Democratic Party of Virginia
- Edelman
- Education Week
- Fulbright
- Google
- Human Rights Campaign
- Institute for Educational Leadership
- Malala Fund
- Manhattan District Attorney's Office
- Maryland State Government
- National Public Radio
- New York City Mayor's Office
- Politico
- Raytheon Company
- The Associated Press
- US House of Representatives
- US Senate
- Yelp
- Youth Service America

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