



## Letter from the Chair

### Highlights from PGH

- 90 students received a B.A. or B.S. in Political Science in May 2012 commencement. 39 of them graduated with honors.

### Save the Date!

**"Revolution on Cullen:  
Campus Radicals in  
History and Mystery"**  
Monday, October 1, 2012

This public symposium, co-sponsored by the Political Science Department, will examine the Civil Rights movement on the UH campus in the 1960s. Featured speakers include [Attica Locke](#), author of [Blackwater Rising](#), a mystery partly set on the UH campus, and political science alumnus Gene Locke.

More details on this event will be available on the Political Science web page in the fall.

This spring we proudly celebrated the Department's award of its 150<sup>th</sup> PhD! This newsletter issue highlights a few of the accomplishments of current and former students in this small but important part of our program.

Our doctoral program began in the late 1960s, only a few years after the University of Houston became a public institution. Competition to start new doctoral programs was stiff. Then-department chair Joseph Nogee (pictured next page) led a multi-year push to become one of the departments that received the honor of launching a new doctoral program.

Political Science granted its first doctorates in 1974, to **Marianne Jameson** and **Glynn Tiller**. In 1975 the program awarded doctoral degrees to **Robert Elliot**, **Florence Gould** and **Arnold Vedletz**. Drs. Tiller, Elliot, Gould and Vedletz immediately took up teaching jobs that led to long and distinguished academic careers at Texas State University, Auburn University, Houston Baptist University and Texas A&M, respectively. Since then, many students have followed in their footsteps. 150 PhDs later, our 40-year-old doctoral program is stronger than ever, and students are doing exciting research.



We look forward to educating our next 150 PhDs!

--Susan Scarrow  
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## Celebrating 150 Doctorates!



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The Political Science Department celebrated its 150<sup>th</sup> PhD milestone in May at an alumni/faculty gathering hosted by alumnus Dr. Chris Cookson.

Pictured above are the six doctorates who jointly put us over the 150 mark: **Laila Sorurbakhsh**, **Aldo Ponce**, **George Hawley**, **Mike Castro**, **Marc**

**Sennewald**, and Texas State Representative **James White**.

Congratulations to them all!

## What Are They Doing Now? 150 PhDs and Counting

Students have used their UH Political Science doctorates in a wide variety of ways. Many are teaching in universities around the United States, from UC Riverside in California to Notre Dame University in Indiana to Bridgewater State University in Connecticut.

There isn't room to list all of our graduates here, and we don't have current information on everyone (readers: please let us know!) but here is a small sample of the stories of our doctorates.

### The UK Connection

A large number of our PhDs are teaching at British universities, including **Mark Shephard** and **Chris Carman** (Strathclyde University, Glasgow), **Lauren**

**McClaren** (Nottingham University), **Michael Bruter** (London School of Economics), and **Iñaki Sagarzazu** (Nuffield College, Oxford.)

### Public Opinion Firms

Several former students are employing their analytic skills in public opinion firms, including **Curtis Frazier**, **Leesa Sherborne**, and **Ronald McCallum**.

### Federal Agencies

Among our former students working in federal agencies are **Gayle Davies** (EPA), **Marika Litras** (FBI), **Michael Speckhard** (CIA), and **Nancy Liounis** (NASA).

### Teaching in Texas

This list is huge, with UH doctorates teaching at universities and community colleges all over the state, including Austin Community College, Houston Baptist University, Houston Community College, Lamar State University, Lone Star College, Rice University, Stephen F. Austin State University, Texas A&M, Texas A&M Corpus Christi, Texas Pan American, Texas Southern, Texas Tech, UH-Downtown, UH Main Campus, UT Austin, UT El Paso, UT-Medical Branch, UT San Antonio, and Wharton Community College.

### Alumni Spotlight Cougar Face-Off in Colorado

Colorado is a hotly contested "swing state" in the 2012 Presidential race. Whatever the outcome of the election, UH Political Science will have bragging rights. Political Science alumnus James Garcia is state director for the Romney campaign in Colorado. On the other side, UH Law School alumnus Frances Nugent is one of the state field directors for the Obama campaign. Mr. Garcia took Professor Richard Murray's political marketing class while he was an undergraduate political science major, while Mr. Nugent took Professor Murray's graduate political parties seminar when he was in law school.

## Alumni/Faculty Evening on Texas Politics

On April 26 UH Political Science hosted its first Alumni/Faculty evening at the UH Alumni Center on the UH main campus. The featured speakers were alumna **State Representative Beverly Woolley** and **Professor Richard Murray**, who talked about the long-term political effects of re-districting and demographic changes on politics in Texas. Rep. Woolley also talked about her experiences as a political science major before and after the University of Houston changed from a private into a public institution.



The evening started with a reception for alumni and faculty that gave time for reunions as well as new encounters.

Given the success of this inaugural event, we hope to make these faculty/alumni evenings an annual occasion. Watch this newsletter and our alumni e-mail list for news about the next event.

**Emeritus Professor Joe Noguee and his wife, "Mrs. Jo".**

## Faculty News and Noteworthy

Congratulations to **Professor Jonathan Slapin**, who was recently promoted to associate professor with tenure effective in the fall semester 2012. Professor Slapin graduated from UCLA, and taught at the University of Nevada Las Vegas and Trinity College, Dublin (Ireland) before joining the UH faculty in 2010.



His research focuses on European integration and legislative behavior in European parliaments. His recent book *Veto Power: Institutional Design in the European Union*, explores how member states of the European Union draft the treaties which govern EU politics. In other work, he examines how electoral and

party pressures shape the actions of legislators, including voting and speech-making. One of his most noticed achievements has been the creation of a computer program to analyze political speech. Along with frequent co-author Sven-Oliver Proksch, Slapin has created *Wordfish*, software designed to estimate parties'

ideological positions.

Professors Slapin and Proksch are currently finishing up a book that employs this software, tentatively titled *Delivering the Message: Party Politics of Parliamentary Debate*. One of Dr. Slapin's recent articles, coauthored with René Lindstädt and Ryan Vander Wielen, examines roll call voting in the European Parliament. It was awarded the 2011 "best article of the year" prize from *Legislative Studies Quarterly*.

**Associate Professors Jeremy Bailey and Brandon Rottinghaus** recently received a National Science Foundation grant to support their continued work on the Presidential Proclamations project.

In spring 2012 the Political Science Department helped to host visiting Fulbright scholar **Dr. Juma Okuku** of Makerere University (Uganda) from Uganda who taught a course on energy politics in Africa.

**Assistant Professor Beth Simas** was awarded a UH New Faculty Research Program grant to enable her to purchase questions on an NSF-funded nationwide survey being conducted in conjunction with the fall 2012 elections. Her research investigates how the meaning individuals assign of the terms "liberal" and "conservative" varies with such factors as the region of the country they live in, their age, and education.

## Graduate Student Focus:

### The Latin American Connection

UH Political Science has a growing number of students from Latin America, attracted by faculty with interests in the region and by Houston's location. Some of them are writing dissertations with Latin American themes, including the following advanced students:

Elections are usually portrayed as a peaceful way to resolve political differences, but in many countries elections are conducted under violent conditions. **Veronica Caro's** dissertation investigates the electoral impact of political violence by researching state elections in Colombia, looking particularly at how it affects the number of contestants, turnout, and electoral competitiveness.

**Marina LaCalle** is investigating how different types of partisan fragmentation in Argentine state legislatures affect the careers of individual legislators, committee practices, and the type of legislation that gets passed. Marina received an NSF dissertation improvement grant to support her research.

**Amalia Mena-Mora** is writing a dissertation on judicial independence of Mexican state administrative courts, investigating whether judges' decisions are influenced by political and institutional factors such as divided government, length of judges' tenure, and method of appointment. Understanding judges' decision-making in new democracies like Mexico illuminates public

perception of courts and their judges as legitimate actors, able to check historically strong state executives. Amalia has won a College dissertation write-up grant to support her research next year.

**Aldo Ponce's** dissertation investigates legislative accountability in presidential democracies, using bill initiation data from Chile, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay and comparative survey data. It offers an explanation about how and why political parties and ultimately party systems become programmatic. Aldo completed his PhD in May and has accepted a teaching position at Mexico's prestigious CIDE University starting in the fall.

#### UH Alumnus in the News: Panel at the British House of Lords

In May **Michael Bruter** (UH Political Science PhD, now lecturer at the London School of Economics) presented the results of his research on EU identity at a panel discussion in the British House of Lords. The research, based on a survey of over 30,000 respondents in 27 EU countries, reported on what it means to feel European in different countries and contexts. The panel included current members of the House of Lords and House of Commons.

## Celebrating 150 PhDs: Graduate Scholarship Fund Launched

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In honor of our 150<sup>th</sup> PhD milestone this spring, faculty members and alumni in the UH Political Science department established a Graduate Student Scholarship Fund. This fund will help us fulfill our mission of educating the next generation of teachers and researchers. UH Political Science aims to continue to attract good graduate students and help them excel in their studies. The success of our doctoral program plays a role in the UH push to become a high-visibility Tier-1 research university.

Contributions to our new Graduate Scholarship fund will help us provide students with much-needed financial support.

Your donations can have double or even triple impact because they enable the Department to leverage matching funds. For instance, in 2012-13 we will use scholarship funds raised in spring 2012 to pay the Department portion of UH Presidential fellowships. These awards, partly funded by the University, partly funded by the Department, help us recruit outstanding new graduate students.

We invite you to support the work of UH Political Science by contributing to our scholarship funds. Donations of all sizes help in this endeavor. You can [contribute on-line](#) by going to the "Giving" tab on our web page (click on "Political Science Graduate Scholarship Fund" on the drop down menu), or use the form provided below.

*Thank you for your continuing support for our students!*



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