PoliSci *now!*

A newsletter for alumni & friends of the
UH Department of Political Science

The Future of Health Care: Policy Experts Visit UH

In October the Political Science Department hosted a 2-day conference on the state of healthcare policy in the U.S. and elsewhere. Organized by assistant professors **Boris Shor** and **Ling Zhu** (respectively, at far right and far left in the picture), this event was attended by scholars from 11 universities from around the country. Local attendees included faculty from other UH departments, including from the College of Social Work, the Law Center and the Communications Disorders department.

Professor Erik Patashnik, Brown University, gave the keynote address, drawing on his recently published book, *Unhealthy Politics: The Battle over Evidence-Based Medicine*. This conference was the latest installment of the department's twice-yearly research conferences, collaboratively organized by faculty members.

Vital Statistics

* **In Fall 2017 there were 776 Political Science majors, a record number.**

* **74 Political Science majors applied for December graduation.**

Message from the Department Chair
After Harvey

It has been a memorable semester. The first week of classes started with a solar eclipse; it ended with a deluge. Tropical Storm Harvey deeply affected all of Houston, including political science students and faculty. Houston and the University worked valiantly to get up and running as soon as possible. The positive response during and after the disaster was as memorable as the flooding itself, with an outpouring of neighbors helping neighbors and generous donations coming in from around the world. Particularly impressive was the effective cooperation between city and county governments and local non-profits (agencies led, in some cases, by graduates of UH political science and MPA programs).

Luckily most UH campus buildings remained dry. Classes resumed after a week, as did many of the other activities planned for the semester –you can read about those elsewhere in this newsletter. Still, it wasn't exactly a normal semester. As I write this, at the beginning of December, many students and faculty members are still displaced or are coping with significant losses to cars, houses or workplaces. Some students have struggled with classes because they lost computers in flooded cars; others have been spending weekends in places such as Beaumont or Port Aransas, helping relatives whose houses were damaged by the slow-moving storm. One of our graduate students lost his house to floodwaters on the same weekend that his wife was giving birth to their second child. Professor **Dick Murray** was flooded out in Houston and then a few weeks later almost lost his house in Napa due to the wildfires.

Yet despite all the challenges, UH had record enrollments this semester and will soon happily – indeed, triumphantly -- graduate a record number of students at December Commencement. After that, we will gladly look ahead and hope for a less eventful semester in the spring.

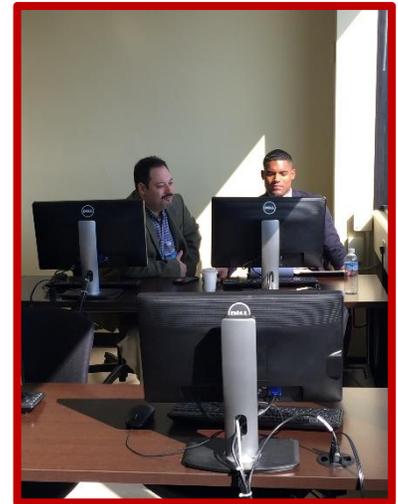--Susan Scarrow
sscarrow@uh.edu

Demystifying Grad School: Weekend Workshop Draws Students from Texas and Beyond

In early November political science majors from all over Texas --and beyond – came to UH to learn about opportunities for graduate studies in political science, public policy and related fields. They attended a 2 day Research/Politics workshop sponsored by the UH Department of Political Science and the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR).

The workshop aimed to de-mystify graduate school in order to encourage students who are interested in pursuing advanced degrees, including by introducing them to students at other institutions who share similar aims. In some sessions faculty helped students to sharpen their research skills, for instance by analyzing data from the 2016 American National Election Survey or by writing their own survey questions. In other sessions faculty and current UH graduate students offered individualized coaching on topics such as choosing the right graduate program, taking advantage of summer research opportunities for undergrads, securing funding, and writing a successful application.   In one session students reviewed some sample applications and formulated their own advice on what made each of them stronger or weaker.

Attendees came from the University of Houston, Rice University, Prairie View A&M, Texas A&M Corpus Christi, UT Rio Grande Valley, and Georgia Gwinnet College.   Special guest speakers were Jay Aiyer from Texas Southern University and Professor Saundra Schneider, from the ICPSR (University of Michigan) and Michigan State University. After the workshop students commented that the weekend had changed their ideas about the accessibility and potential affordability of graduate school. Students particularly appreciated the opportunities for one-on-one conversations with faculty and grad students. As one student put it, "having the graduate students interact with the groups was …very helpful in forming realistic expectations of graduate school."

We wish all these students best of luck with their future studies!

Associate Professor **Jason Casellas** helping a
student attendee with data analysis

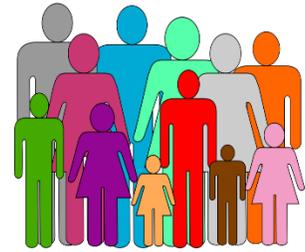# Faculty/Student Research: Improving Political Predictions

Associate Professor Ryan Kennedy is enlisting UH undergraduates in a grant-funded research project on political forecasting. This project responds to the growing interest in using data and statistics to forecast political events such as election outcomes and economic developments; the main question for this project is how best to combine machine learning tools with human judgements about the likelihood of events. Dr. Kennedy is conducting his research as part of a team that also includes scholars from Harvard, MIT and Northeastern University.   Their research was awarded a $450,000 grant under the Hybrid Forecasting Competition sponsored by the Intelligence Advanced Research Activity (IARPA).

As part of this research, the UH student researchers will learn about the current state of forecasting efforts and will participate in effectiveness tests for different types of machine learning aids.

Faculty Research Spotlight: All in the Family?

The 1970s hit sitcom "All in the Family" drew its comic energy from long-running conflicts between the conservative Archie Bunker and his long-haired liberal son-in-law. New research by Professors **Kent Tedin** and Shanto Iyengar (Stanford University), along with Stanford graduate student Tobias Konitzer, shows that today's all-in-the-family politics look a lot different than in the 1970s. Their article on this, "The Home as a Political Fortress: Family Agreement in an Era of Polarization" is forthcoming in the *Journal of Politics.* It is based on a 2015 YouGov survey of married couple dyads and parent-child dyads, supplemented by an analysis of the same dyads for more than 146 million registered voters. The data show a dramatic increase in the political correspondence between married couples and their children. This change in political fault lines has important consequences for mass politics in an era of political polarization.

Grad Students Win Research Funding

Congratulations to these students who recently won new research support:

Devon Jones has been awarded the Maud Smith Paddock Graduate Fellowship from the UH Women's Gender and Sexuality Studies program. This scholarship will help her to complete her dissertation on state supreme court judges and abortion cases.

Kim Manh has been awarded the Eadington Fellowship to complete a 2 month research residency at the Special Collections Library at the University of Nevada Las Vegas. Research at this archive will help him to complete his dissertation on the evolution and diffusion of state-level gaming laws.

Philip Waggoner has been awarded an early career research grant from the William A. Steiger Fund for Legislative Politics and the Centennial Center of the American Political Science Association. This grant will fund data collection for a study of representation in the United States Senate. This project builds on Phil's dissertation research, which investigates representation and the responsiveness of political elites.

Grad Alumni Notes

Nathan Hosey reported in this fall from Mountain View College, part of the Dallas County Community College District, where he has been a faculty member since 2015. In addition to teaching, he has founded a political science club to encourage students who want more opportunities to explore politics and political science.

Laila Sorurbakhsh is now serving as Graduate Director for the MA in Non-Profit Management at UH-Downtown.

Student notes

PhD student **Naomi Nubin** was selected to present a research poster at the UH Graduate School's Research and Scholarship event, which took place in early November. She presented her research on intersectionality and representation.

Master's student **Joseph Lazarro** is a co-author on "Ideology, Grandstanding, and Strategic Party Disloyalty in British Parliament", recently accepted in the American Political Science Review. Lead authors are Associate Professor **Justin Kirkland** and Jon Slapin (Essex University), along with Essex students Tom O'Grady, and Patrick Leslie. This project, which applies theories developed in the US to the UK parliament, is just one of many fruitful research collaborations at UH that are routinely crossing traditional subfield lines, and in which graduate students successfully partner with faculty to produce top-quality research.

PhD student Jonathan Solis had a paper accepted at International Interactions, co-authored with Assistant Professor **Patrick Shea**.

Political Science major **Danielle Niangar** won a Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship which gave her a stipend to conduct research under the supervision of faculty mentor **Patrick Shea**. In her research she studied the effects of international law on human rights.

Now Hear This! Faculty Podcasts

UH faculty members don't confine their lectures and teaching to the classroom. Now you can hear some of them regularly on-line, courtesy of podcasts which have launched within the last year.

Assistant Professor (and Graduate Director) **Jeffrey Church** hosts his own podcast, called *The Political Theory Review*. This is a series of in-depth conversations with authors of recent books on Political Theory and Social & Political Philosophy. He has so far recorded 11 conversations with scholars, including Steven Smith (Yale), Vickie Sullivan (Tufts), and John Scott (UC-Davis). You can access his podcast on iTunes or wherever podcasts are found.

Professor **Brandon Rottinghaus** co-hosts the weekly *Party Politics* podcast, along with Texas Southern faculty member Jay Aiyer. This podcast, produced by Houston Public Media, focusses on current issues in national and state politics.

Associate Professor **Jeronimo Cortina** hosts another weekly podcast for Houston Public Media, "En Pocas Palabras" (in a few words). This podcast keeps the Spanish-speaking community informed about the week's hot political topic (see photo above). Both of these Houston Public Media podcasts can be found on the HPM Facebook page and YouTube Channel.

Graduate Excellence Fund Update: Passing it Forward

In spring 2017 a group of alumni and faculty established a Fund for Graduate Excellence. This fund will help students with costs that might otherwise be overwhelming. For instance, $600 can help a student present research at a conference; $1200 can help a student complete his dissertation or thesis by buying questions on a survey, or can fund fieldwork doing interviews or visiting archives.

Thanks to the generosity of department alumni & friends, this new fund has now reached the minimum funding level and will begin providing student support next year. But we are not stopping at the minimum! Like graduate education itself, building this fund is a long-term endeavor. We invite you to join alumni, students, faculty and friends of UH Political Science in creating this lasting gift to UH students. The form below gives details on how to give.

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UNIVERSITY of **HOUSTON** | POLITICAL SCIENCE
Graduate Excellence Fund Gift Form

Make check or money order payable to:
University of Houston

Name:_____

Address:_____

City/State/Zip:_____

Mail with form to:
Political Science Dept., PGH Room 447
Attention: Business Manager
University of Houston
4800 Calhoun Road
Houston, TX 77204-3011

Amount of gift: ☐ **$100**   ☐ **$250**   ☐ **Other** _____

Please designate my gift to the Political Science:
☐ **Graduate Excellence Fund (HE1817HA587)**
☐ **Political Science Annual Gift Fund (HC49553RN)**

Or give on line on the secure
College Giving Page

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