

## 2019 Belmont Undergraduate Research Symposium

### Political Science I

Moderator: Nathan Griffith, Ph.D.

April 11, 2019, 12:30-1:45 p.m.  
IHSB 240

12:30 p.m. – 12:45 p.m.

#### **404 Title Not Found**

Alex Seeley

Faculty Advisor: Nathan Griffith, Ph.D.

My research explores the relationship between institutional structure national team success in the sport of soccer (futbol). More specifically, my research identifies a positive correlation between national team success and decentralized political systems. Additionally, institutional structures which most closely reflect democratic governing bodies consistently field the most successful soccer teams at the World Cup. Despite results from my research which confirm my hypothesis, there are certain also inconsistencies which I could not account for in my research. The success of Iceland's national team, although brief, still provides some grey area in my research Bridging these two, I confirm that, the more politically free a country is, the more success their national team will experience. The result shows that more often than not, centralized political regimes prove to be sincerely disadvantageous by comparison to decentralized. Stemming from their lack of political freedom, centralized political systems do not provide the same resources which are necessary in promoting success. I identify the most notable advantage seen in decentralized systems, is their financial well being. I used GDP as my measurement to determine the financial well-being of a country. Countries with a poor GDP score consistently field less successful national teams in the World Cup. Consequently, due to lack of available resources and other variables mentioned above, I assert that centralized political institutions, historically speaking, hold an immediate advantage entering the World Cup competition.

12:45 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.

#### **A Country Divided: The Impact of Political Division on Economic Growth**

Jacob Hukill

Faculty Advisor: Nathan Griffith, Ph.D.

Previous research finds a negative relationship between ethnic and religious division and economic growth within countries. As social cleavages become larger and groups in society pit themselves against one another, conflict between them tends to stunt long-run growth performance. Although ethnic, religious, and cultural diversification has been discussed at length within the literature in the context of economic growth, less is known about how a divided political system impacts growth within a country. This paper seeks to bridge this gap and explore the economic impacts of political division through investigating both the fractionalization and polarization of political systems. Using panel data from industrialized countries, I seek to

analyze this political division by examining the distribution of political parties within legislatures.

1:00 p.m. – 1:15 p.m.

## **Representation Without Representation: Women Underrepresented in United States' Congress**

Lauren Barnett

Faculty Advisor: Nathan Griffith, Ph.D.

It is no secret that women are underrepresented in Congress, but to what degree? Women currently make up 50.5% of the U.S. population but only 23% of seats in the Senate and 19.5% of seats in the House. Why is that? Women were not allowed to even vote until 1919, and women were not represented in Congress until 1921. However, the delayed timeline is not the only reason for the inequity. Many scholars have hypothesized three broad reasons for why women are underrepresented: 1. Parties and other organizations are not doing an adequate job recruiting male and female candidates equally. 2. Women face a tougher road campaigning whether due to stereotypical gender norms or campaign finance. 3. Women have less political ambition than men. I hypothesize that even college-aged women have less political ambition than men; I also hypothesize that Republican women have less ambition than Democratic women to run for office. Using a survey of Belmont students, I will use the data to compare both male and female and political parties to one another. I hope that through this research I will help to further answer the notion of women's underrepresentation.

1:15 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.

## **The Effects of Societal Demand for Diversity in the United States Court System**

Madeline Langub

Faculty Advisor: Nathan D. Griffith, Ph.D.

As the United States evolves and becomes increasingly open to diversity, it has been seen that the demand for persons of all races, religions, and ethnicities in government positions has become more pronounced. Out of 113 Supreme Court Justices in the history of our country, only six have been women and/or people of color. These Justices were appointed within the last 30 years. I pose the question, with the current upward trend of social diversity, will the number of people of color and female justices continue to rise and eventually equal the level of nomination of white men? In the history of our Supreme Court, two justices have been African American, four have been women, and one has been from Latin descent. Three of four women are currently serving today. Research in the area surrounding diversity of U.S. Supreme Court nominees includes various viewpoints for the "why." The past 30 years have seen huge steps in acceptance and celebration of diversity in the United States. I hope to use my research to see the correlation between societal acceptance of diverse groups and the change in nominees to U.S. Supreme Court.

1:30 p.m. – 1:45 p.m.

## **Working Together: Reforming the Electoral College to Work for All Americans**

Phoebe Hoffman

Faculty Advisor: Nathan Griffith, Ph.D.

Most Americans are unhappy with the current workings of the Electoral College. Something needs to change but everyone has a different idea about what change should be made. This study looks at how the Framers of the U.S. Constitution meant for the Electoral College to function, and how we may be able to alter the electoral college to represent the original function of the Electoral College. To do this I first gained an in-depth understanding of how the Electoral College was intended to function. I came to the conclusion that if Electors were appointed after the popular vote was counted according to the proportion of the popular vote their party won, we could create an environment where more parties could be introduced, and where parties could form coalitions to put forth candidates that are willing to compromise and work with others to ensure the President represents the interests of as many Americans as possible.

## 2019 Belmont Undergraduate Research Symposium

### Political Science II

Moderator: Nathan Griffith, Ph.D.

April 11, 2019, 3:30-5:00 p.m.  
McWhorter 108

3:30 p.m. – 3:45 p.m.

#### **Shirking Responsibility: The Effect of Term Limits and Retirement on Congressional Voting**

Emma McCullough

Faculty Advisor: Nathan D. Griffith, Ph.D.

Upon election, it is generally expected that a representative's vote will directly reflect the preferences of his\her constituents. However, this does not always occur. In political literature, this is referred to as legislative shirking. With the electoral incentives of acting in line with constituent beliefs, such as earning votes for reelection, what factors go into an act of legislative shirking? In this study, I examine the effects of retirement from office and term limits on the voting pattern of outgoing legislators in comparison to representatives who are seeking reelection to determine if there is a distinct difference in the legislative behavior of these different groups. I argue that there is a pronounced effect on the voting behavior of legislators who are either termed out or retire from political office.

3:45 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

#### **An Analysis on the Funding of Mass Transit Systems and how it Impacts Wait Times and Daily Ridership**

Rachel Kirsch

Faculty Advisor: Nathan D. Griffith, Ph.D.

Despite all serving the same function, mass transit systems around the world all have vastly different methods and results in how they service their riders. One main difference in systems is the way in which they are funded: solely by the government, solely by private entities, or by a combination of both the government and private companies. The study believes that the funding type that will produce the outcomes is the public-private partnership. In order to measure these outcomes, this thesis looks at the average wait time for riders at the station as well as the number of people who use the system. The research identifies the twenty biggest cities on five different continents and then compares their populations, funding types, average wait times, and ridership percentages in order to discover if public-private partnerships do create better mass transit systems.

4:00 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.

### **Pulling the Strings of Hate: Elites and Polarization**

Kelby Bibler

Faculty Advisor: Nathan D. Griffith, Ph.D.

Mostly utilized as a means of examining questions regarding electoral behavior and congressional representation, the source of polarization continues to be an under-researched topic. Specifically, polarization is often referenced as an explanatory phenomenon though rarely as a means toward a political goal – which may actually be more valuable. The current literature, which falls into three camps, characterizes polarization as (1) getting worse based on legislative responses between opposing parties, (2) accidental fluctuations in American political culture, and (3) arising out of political elite and directed at American citizens. Building upon this third camp, the goal of this research is to join the Italian school of elitism with explanations of polarization and demonstrate that political elites, use political polarization as a **means** to increase their power over citizens. In this vein, I examine the relationship between citizens' appraisals of partisans outside their party and congressional members' willingness to work together. When viewed over time, trends in these data provide the platform by which I examine the three camps of polarization. Finally, with the additional analysis of these trends in the context of points where elite access to information changed, I examine how polarization changes when political elite information access changes. This allows me to paint a picture of elite involvement in polarization and determine their effect on its progression.

4:15 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

### **Pushing Towards a Place at the Table: Why Small States Participate in International Organizations**

Colleen Ellis

Faculty Advisor: Nathan Griffith, Ph.D.

While small states are on average the majority of the international community, they historically have little influence in world happenings. With this pattern present, why do small states choose to pursue active roles in international organizations? Dominant medium or large size states have engaged in foreign policy to further their interests and power level whereas for small states, engagement alone is not a realistic avenue to gain influence, until now. Twenty-first century development has caused the large post-cold war intergovernmental organizations to lose momentum and regional and/or issue-specific organizations to take a more relevant role. With this, small states have a greater opportunity.

This new nuanced perception of power benefits small states by diluting a great power's perception of influence over its smaller neighbors. Confidence in internal stability alongside an appearance of obscurity in regards to national direction in the global community leads a small state to pursue a high level of foreign policy initiative. A declining hegemon will open up new avenues for a small state to increase its influence, while a regional IGO may give a small state a greater ability to shape policy outside a bilateral relationship.

4:30 p.m. – 4:45 p.m.

## **Why Do We Fight? The Effects of Economic Activity and Competitive Elections on Polarization within the United States Congress**

Brayden Hunter

Faculty Advisor: Nathan Griffith, Ph.D.

Why do lawmakers agree to legislation that goes against their political beliefs? One theory is that a strong economy and competitive elections make politicians behave more moderately. This increases the likelihood of their proposing or supporting legislation which goes against the fundamental ideals of their political party. I score the polarization of legislators in the United States Congress with the DW-NOMINATE model, and then compare those scores across periods in which the variables I am testing for, strong economy and competitive elections, are expressed or not. In other words, I am looking to see whether a politician who won a competitive election in economically strong times more or less polarized than a politician who won a non-competitive election during economically poor times. I expect to see lower levels of polarization from politicians elected during which both of my variables are being expressed. I also expect to see significantly higher levels of polarization from politicians who were elected during which neither of the variables are being expressed.

4:45 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

## **U.S. Response Aid and the Ebola Epidemic**

Madeline Machen

Faculty Advisor: Nathan Griffith, Ph.D.

In this paper I will explore US response aid in regards to the Ebola Epidemic in West Africa from 2014-2016 and its effects on the region. I address the question of the United States sending health aid to countries experiencing outbreaks in reducing deaths related to infectious disease. I hypothesize that foreign health aid in developing regions, like West Africa, reduces mortality however, in cases of lethal outbreaks such as Ebola, inefficient methods and gaps in strategies also contribute to higher than necessary mortality, not only in the short term, but for long term health goals as well. Simply sending money is not effective foreign aid, I test this by using an Ordinary Least Squares Regression model. I will examine the relationship between my independent variables – GDP per capita, Human Development Index, Population Density, the Number of Health Care Workers per 1000 people, Infrastructure, and Geography, and the dependent variable being the mortality rate.