

North Hall News

UW-Madison Department of Political Science

Spring 2025



From the Desk of the Chair

Dear friends,

I remain amazed and humbled that I have the privilege to be part of this incredible institution. Yet, there is no escaping the fact that this is a time of great uncertainty for higher education, including for UW. For the Department, these challenges come at what would otherwise be a time of tremendous growth. We continue to be one of the biggest majors in the College, with over 1150 majors! This year, more than 400 new Political Science majors graduated into the world. Our political science certificate (think “minor”) which we launched in 2023, had 128 students in 2024-25, more than doubling the number from the previous year. This past spring we offered 38 undergraduate political science courses, enrolling nearly 2500 students, and we taught more than 5000 students in our courses this academic year. The Wisconsin in Washington program also continues to grow. We had 16 students in DC in this program in the Spring and will have 25 students there this summer. Our students are spending time beyond DC as well: almost a third of our majors studied abroad in 27 different countries on every continent (other than Antarctica). Our mentoring program continues to expand, matching 20 current students with recent alumni for career advice. Nor are we resting on our laurels! We piloted a Political Science Data Analysis and Visualization workshop for students in our major and certificate program

who want to build their skills for research and jobs after graduation. We hope to institutionalize these workshops next year.

On the faculty front, we are excited to announce that we were able to recruit six new faculty members this year! Professor Matthew Pietryka (currently at Florida State University) will hold the George and Carmella Edwards Chair in American Politics. Professor Anton Strezhnev (currently at University of Chicago) will join us to teach political methods, and Professor Andrew Trexler (PhD Duke) will teach American politics and political communication. Professor Jeff Church (currently at the University of Houston) will be teaching political theory. All four will join us in the fall. Professor Rebecca Ploof (PhD University of Chicago, currently at Leiden University) will teach environmental politics and political theory, and Professor Jian Xu (PhD Emory University, currently at National University of Singapore) will teach Chinese politics. They will join us in Fall 2026.

North Hall is also getting some much-needed work! Starting (hopefully) next year we will be getting accessible bathrooms on the first floor as well as upgraded restrooms on the 2nd and 3rd floors. This is the first step in a project intended to help make North Hall a tangible part of the political science undergraduate experience.

We remain committed to our core educational and research missions, to the Wisconsin Idea, and to the project of “sifting and winnowing.” Your support in the past has strengthened the department and allows us to weather prior storms. Together, we can continue to move the department forward.



On, Wisconsin!

Nadav Shelef
Department Chair

Undergraduate Updates

This past year, we've continued building a vibrant, connected community for Political Science majors and Political Science Certificate students through hands-on learning, mentorship, student leadership, and big conversations about the issues that matter. Here's what we've been up to:

Alumni Mentor Program

We matched 16 students with early-career alumni working in all kinds of fields—government, law, nonprofits, corporate sectors, and media. From the State Department to the Hill to environmental investing, our students got a front-row seat to what life after graduation can look like. We've also added career-building workshops on elevator pitches, LinkedIn profiles, interviewing, and résumé writing to help students sharpen their skills.

BridgeMadison Student Org

BridgeMadison, led by students Miranda Garcia-Dove and Abby Grabowski, has become a go-to space for students to talk about key political issues—from climate change and reproductive rights to gun control and AI. They're bringing those conversations to a wider audience by partnering with our department podcast, 1050 Bascom. This year, they also engaged in shared discussions with the Chicago Institute of Politics and met with leaders like Senator Tammy Baldwin and Speaker Robin Vos, and had dinner with members of the Wisconsin State Legislature at the Chancellor's residence.



Amy Gangl

Director of Undergraduate Studies

Peer Advising & Certificate Support

Our peer advising team—Alice Hill, Sadie Rosenthal, and John Schwartz—were at the heart of our student programming. They helped fellow students navigate the Political Science Certificate, organized fun and welcoming events like our Taco Bar and study sessions, and managed the department's Instagram and internship board. They also support the Alumni Mentor Program and the Undergraduate Research Program, including our annual Thesis Symposium.

1050 Bascom Podcast

Our podcast, led by Nama Pandey, Honor Durham, and Allison Keeley this past year, continues to grow as we connect with alumni, faculty, students, and community leaders. We're excited to see more students getting involved as hosts and guests. Nama is staying on and will be joined by Heewon Lin, Lauren Munda and Evan Randle. It's a great way to connect classroom learning to real-world politics.

What's Next?

We're gearing up to launch a U.S. National Security Certificate in Fall 2026. The certificate will build on our strengths in international relations and national security, with more events like this year's panel on "Contemporary National Security Challenges and U.S. Soft Power," which featured leaders from the National Guard and U.S. Air Force.

Undergraduate Overachievers

The Department of Political Science covers a wide array of academic programming, but undergraduate education is at the heart of all we do. Read about some of our esteemed undergraduate students below



Alice Hill - Portola Valley, CA

Alice graduated this spring with a double major in Political Science and English, and a certificate in Public Policy. She served as one of our three peer advisors, to offer mentorship to her fellow students. Alice also participated as a research assistant in the Elections Research Center and served on the executive board of Pi Sigma Alpha. She hopes to work in San Francisco or Sacramento politics as a Legislative Aide for a state or local politician.

Favorite Study Spots

- Wisconsin Historical Society
- Memorial Union and Union South
- Any coffee shop



Sadie Rosenthal - Chevy Chase, MD

Sadie, another 2025 graduate, majored in Political Science and Legal Studies, with certificates in Public Policy and Science Communications. At UW, Sadie was another one of our peer mentors, as well as the President of Pi Sigma Alpha and Vice Chair of UW College Democrats. She hopes to pursue a career in government relations or public affairs in Washington, D.C. after graduation.

Favorite Study Spots

- Chazen Museum of Art
- Michaelangelo's Coffee House

Honor Durham - Pelham, NY

Honor graduated with degrees in Political Science and Data Science in May. She served as the Chair of the Student Election Commission at the Associated Students of Madison, a host of the 1050 Bascom Podcast, and interned for Nineteen Sixty Campaigns and the Office of the Secretary of State of Wisconsin. She will soon be working as a Research Support Associate at the MIT Election Data and Science Lab.

Favorite Study Spots

- Second floor of College Library
- The Student Activity Center (SAC)
- Michaelangelo's Coffee House



Nama Pandey - Madison, WI

Nama is a rising senior double majoring in Political Science and History with certificates in Gender Studies and Public Policy, who has worked on U.S. Senate re-election campaigns and interned at the WI State Capital. At UW, she serves as the Community Outreach Director at WSUM 97.1 FM Madison, and hosts the 1050 Bascom Podcast. Once Nama graduates, she hopes to attend law school, eventually working in immigration law.

Favorite coffee shop

- Ancora on King St.

Currently Reading

- *What You are Looking For is in the Library*
Michiko Aoyama



Graduate Updates

We had a banner year for academic job placements! Ten of our PhD students and recent graduates used our placement services—wherein we help students secure jobs by reviewing their job market materials, conducting mock one-on-one interviews, helping them practice their job talks and so forth—to secure tenure track jobs and postdoctoral positions. Six of our recent graduates received tenure-track positions—two at Cornell University and one each at the University of Toronto, Boston College, Tulane University, and Middlebury College. In addition, five of our students received postdoc appointments at Harvard University, Brown University, Princeton University, the University of Texas-Austin, and the University of Florida. Congratulations, all!

Despite budget uncertainty, we've also wrapped up an excellent year for graduate admissions. This year, a record 442 individuals—up 39% from last year—applied to our PhD program. We admitted 29 of these students for a record low admissions rate of 6.6%. The admitted students were among the strongest so far, with competing offers from practically all the top public and private universities, including the University of California at Berkeley, the University of Michigan, Princeton, Harvard, Yale and Stanford. Despite budget uncertainty, which caused us to be unable to guarantee funding for approximately half the admits, eight students enrolled with us, a take-up rate of 28%. Members of the incoming class had

competing offers from Cornell, the University of California San Diego, the University of California Los Angeles, the University of Michigan, Princeton and Yale. Noteworthy, 75% of the enrollees are first-generation students.

One of the nicest parts of the job of being DGS is awarding funding for the many excellent research projects proposed by our students. This year, we've distributed approximately \$120,000 in summer research funding, the bulk of which is for 41 "Summer Initiative" research grants. \$10,000 of the balance is for collaborative Rappoport student-faculty research grants, and \$21,000 is summer writing fellowships for people who plan to graduate soon but don't have any other source of summer funding. The research that we are funding are for a wide range of projects studying people's preferences over tariffs in the context of national security concerns, the lobbying of international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF, the study of the working class in the United States, university governing boards, populism in Brazil, authoritarian nostalgia in Spain, the normative political theory of Japanese imperialism and the study of Hayek and individualism. The grants fund elite interviews, participant observation, survey experiments, fieldwork, book, software, and data purchases, and additional training at summer institutes. These grants enable our students to further their dissertation research and to publish while they are in grad school. Publishing is critical to our students' success on the job market and I'm pleased to note that we've seen a rapid uptick in student publications, from around 8 in 2020 to 14 in 2024.



On, Wisconsin!

Rikhil Bhavnani

Director of Graduate Studies



Exploring Native Identity

Natalie Jones-Kerwin is a Ph.D. Candidate in the UW-Madison Department of Political Science and proud tribal member of the Bad River Band of the Lake Superior Chippewa Indian tribe, whose research focuses on Indigenous identity, political behavior, and data sovereignty. She kindly took the time to speak with us about her research and forthcoming dissertation.

What inspired you to pursue your line of research?

“In college, I started studying political science and immediately saw the erasure. Native peoples were either ignored, taught only in past tense, and reduced to a small racial category that erased our tribal sovereignty. I wanted to ask different questions; questions rooted in the lived experiences of my community and our political realities as sovereign nations. This led me to pursue a Ph.D. in Political Science, with a focus on Indigenous identity, political behavior, and data sovereignty. It also led me to learn and aid in the development of methodological skills that would allow me to work ethically and collaboratively with Native nations, wanting to both preserve traditional knowledge and uplift the next seven generations of Indigenous voices in the political realm.”

It's interesting that you singled out the number seven. Does that bear any significance?

“The number seven holds deep meaning for us as Ojibwe people for many reasons. One of the most important is the Seven Grandfather Teachings: wisdom, love, respect, bravery, honesty, humility, and truth. These teachings guide us in how we should live in relation to one another,

ourselves, and the world around us. We are the seventh generation of Indigenous peoples, and our ancestors prayed that by this time, we would be free to practice our ways of life. Because of their vision and sacrifices, we now carry the duty to preserve and protect our culture, our languages, and our lands. We must also think ahead to the seven generations who will come after us. It's about thinking long term and holding ourselves accountable for the future, making choices today that ensure the well-being of those yet to be born.”

Can you tell us about your dissertation?

“My dissertation, ‘Citizens of Two Sovereigns: Indigenous Identity and Political Engagement in Wisconsin,’ investigates two central questions: (1) What constitutes a multidimensional understanding of Native American identity? and (2) How do the various dimensions of Native identity influence political behaviors of Native Americans? Understanding Native American political behavior requires a shift from dominant survey frameworks that treat Native identity solely as a racial classification. These frameworks often overlook the political status of sovereign Tribal Nations, as entities that define their own citizenry, govern internal affairs, administer justice, and enter government-to-government

relationships with the U.S. government. Better understanding Native identity helps us understand central issues in political behavior research including who is recognized as a legitimate voice, how cultural, national, racial, and political ties affect different kinds of political engagement, better understanding American federalism, and how historical consciousness shaped by settler colonialism drives political action.”

Has your research gone in any unexpected directions since the beginning?

“One way my work has changed over time is in thinking about identity and belonging holistically, by including national identity. For Native peoples, this includes our citizenship with our tribal nations in addition to our citizenship as US citizens. In the field, the stories from different generations and understanding of that identity often took me by surprise and forced me to forgo our westernized understandings of belonging and instead embrace Indigenous understandings of relations (to each other, land, water, air, food, our four legged friends, our medicines, our language, our ancestors).”

What are some challenges you’ve faced while conducting your research?

“For Indigenous peoples in the U.S., there is a long-broken history of distrust between academic institutions and research generally. The biggest challenge I’ve faced is navigating ways to build trust between myself and the communities I am working with. Trust isn’t built through protocols or paperwork alone. It grows over time through listening deeply, showing up consistently, and honoring relationships beyond the project ‘timeline.’ Trust doesn’t come from a grant proposal or a consent form; it comes from being human together. It looks like attending community events with no agenda. Sharing meals. Attending ceremony together. Learning the stories people choose to tell, crying together when appropriate, and knowing when not to ask. It’s about showing humility, accepting feedback, and returning not just with results, but with respect. Always return to the community. Share what was learned in a way that’s accessible and meaningful. Be open to critique. Trust is sustained through honesty, follow-through, and the willingness to be held accountable. It’s our way of life.”

Next up for Natalie is working on a collaborative statewide survey on Native voting behavior as she continues to work on her dissertation.



The 43rd annual Bad River Manoomin celebration powwow, August 2024, New Odanah, WI / Natalie Jones-Kerwin

Natalie’s Favorites

Food in Madison

Red Sushi - W. Washington Ave

Book

The Marrow Thieves
Cherie Dimaline

Place on Campus

Memorial Union Terrace

Diversity

"Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for the Department of Political Science at UW-Madison. We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals. The political science department fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background – people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world. We commit ourselves to maintain a welcoming and inclusive environment in our learning spaces and workspaces."

After three years of serving as Associate Chair for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, my term is coming to an end this summer. I have greatly appreciated the opportunity to contribute to our collective effort to make the Political Science Department a welcoming place for all. As a community, we have worked to enrich the department's intellectual life by hosting more than five dozen Diversity, Equity, Justice, and Power (DEJP) lectures. Our new Strategies for Equity in the Academic (SEA) learning series featured events on mentoring, syllabus design, and talking across the ideological divide. We sought to increase feelings of belonging by hosting a series of social events and department outings. And we successfully worked toward creating more representative faculty and student populations. These are just some examples of our common efforts, and I am grateful for being part of a community that continues to make them a priority. I am also grateful to my colleague and friend Ben Márquez for taking over from me on August 1. Ben will bring important new perspectives and ideas to the job that will help maintain and advance our core values of pluralism, equity, diversity, belonging, and inclusive excellence.



Nils Ringe

Associate Chair for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion



From Bio to I.O.

Or: Why it's Never Too Late to Change Your Field of Study

From a biology major at Caltech, to a Ph.D in Political Science at Harvard, to an esteemed Professor in Political Science, author, and American Academy of Arts and Sciences inductee, Lisa Martin has had a fascinating career. Many people might achieve half as much and be satisfied, but Lisa has no intention of slowing down.

In Pasadena California in the early to mid-80's, a young biology major at Caltech faced the question that occurs to many an undergraduate student: "Is this really what I want to do?" A question that, many years later, continues to prove to Professor Lisa Martin that taking a leap of faith into a new field can be a great idea.

Having acquired a taste for International Political Economy in her undergrad days, Lisa decided to pursue a Ph.D. in political science after graduating, with a focus on international institutions. She set her sights on Harvard, a move which proved fortuitous when Robert Keohane, author of *After Hegemony* (the book which Lisa says "completely changed the way political scientists think about international institutions") joined the faculty during her second year of graduate school. She notes that working with him came naturally, and she was inspired to follow in his footsteps.

The first through line of Lisa's career from pre- to post-Ph.D. was the study of international organizations (IOs), such as the European Union and United Nations, and how they facilitated cooperation when imposing economic sanctions, which eventually turned into her first book, *Coercive Cooperation: Explaining Multilateral*

Economic Sanctions, in 1992.

"Some of the main functions that seemed to matter were creating linkages between issues, setting standards, and putting states' reputations on the line. The EU and the UN did significantly raise the level of observed cooperation on multilateral sanctions, compared to cases where sanctions were not organized by an IO."

Then came the study of monetary institutions, like the European Monetary Union, which oversaw the creation of the Euro, and the International Monetary Fund, which Lisa argues is potentially the most consequential international organization in the world, tracing its change in function from overseeing a fixed exchange rate regime, to containing global financial crises.

In 2000, Lisa published her second book, *Democratic Commitments: Legislatures and International Cooperation*, which switched focus from international organizations to domestic institutions - specifically legislatures.

"Conventional wisdom held that when legislatures became involved in foreign policy, they tended to undermine international cooperation. My work

showed that, in contrast, legislatures could enhance the credibility of state commitments to cooperate, as long as the executive branch took them into account during international negotiations, rather than attempting to circumvent them.”

By this point in her career, Lisa had covered many of the broad-strokes organizations, and so decided to turn her attention to “IOs that aren’t as well-known but that exhibit some fascinating characteristics,” such as the International Whaling Commission,

“The IWC was initially established to preserve the practice of whaling at a sustainable level. When this proved impossible, members settled on a moratorium on whaling, with some exceptions for scientific research and indigenous peoples. Japan objected strongly to the moratorium, and started offering to pay new members’ dues, as long as they would vote with Japan to overturn it. The IWC thus became the first “fisheries” organization to count many landlocked nations among its members. Japan took to blatantly bribing other members, even bringing bags of yen to annual meetings. The IWC stopped this practice, Japan was unsuccessful in overturning the moratorium, and it has now left the organization.”

...or the Organization of Islamic Cooperation,

“I recently acted as an expert witness in a case that required me to learn something about the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. While the organization’s purpose is to promote Islamic values, it turns out to be organized very much like a standard western multilateral organization; multilateralism is a very successful institutional form. One of my ongoing projects treats maritime borders as institutions, and considers the conditions under which disputes over maritime borders are resolved. This is an especially pressing question today, as the Arctic opens up to shipping, and China stakes aggressive claims in the South China Sea.”

Enter the 2024-25 Academic year. In the Fall, Lisa was awarded a Wisconsin Alumni and Research Foundation (WARF) Named Professorship, which recognizes excellence

in faculty research, academics, and outreach at various stages of their scholarly careers and provides an opportunity for continued development of their research programs. For her professorship, Lisa chose to honor Crawford Young (1931-2020), who wrote the book on the Department of Political Science, and whose study of African politics contributed to the modern study of national identity.

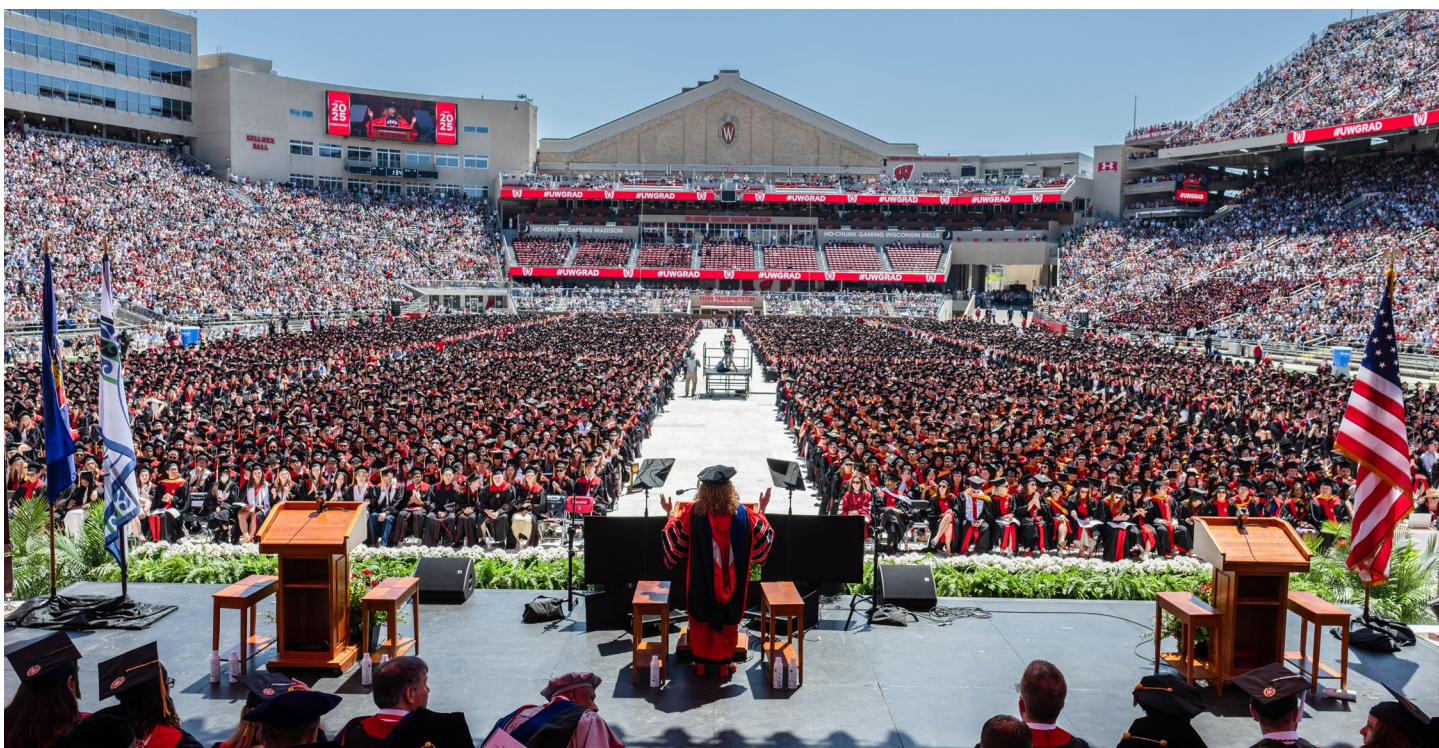
Not to be outdone, Lisa received a second significant accolade this academic year. To her complete surprise, she was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, noting:

“In order to be elected, you need to be nominated by two current members of the AAAS, and then to be elected by the full membership. Rose McDermott and Bob Keohane nominated me, and it’s an honor to have been elected. I’m looking forward to attending the induction ceremony in October.”

Presently, Lisa is working on the aforementioned project on maritime borders, as well as another project regarding the public affairs offices of IOs.

“Although these offices are generally never mentioned in the founding documents, pretty much all significant IOs have developed some version of an office to communicate with the public and journalists. But we know very little about them. With the spread of misinformation and disinformation, this function of IOs seems increasingly important; just consider the challenges facing the World Health Organization during the COVID pandemic. I’m excited just to learn about what these offices do, how and why they do it, and if they are having any effect.”

After recounting such a long and successful career from beginning to present, one question remained: “What’s next?” To this, Lisa simply responded, “Probably keep doing the same thing for the next 5+ years,” perfectly illustrating her dedication to her research and teaching. If one follows her trajectory over the last five years, we can only imagine what she will achieve over the next five.



Follow Us!

 [instagram.com/uw_polisci](https://www.instagram.com/uw_polisci)

 [linkedin.com/company/uwpolisci](https://www.linkedin.com/company/uwpolisci)

 [facebook.com/uwpoliscimajor](https://www.facebook.com/uwpoliscimajor)

 bsky.app/profile/uwpolisci.bsky.social

 [Listen to 1050 Bascom on Spotify](https://open.spotify.com/track/1050-Bascom)



Political Science
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

110 North Hall

1050 Bascom Mall

Madison, WI 53706

Our sincere thanks to the many alumni and friends who have generously supported the University of Wisconsin's Political Science Department. Private gifts are increasingly critical to ensure that the Department maintains its stature as one of the nation's premier political science programs. Your donations help us to assist promising undergraduate majors and provide them with a range of extracurricular and leadership opportunities, host a stimulating series of talks and other scholarly activities, and attract and support the research and teaching of top faculty and graduate students.

Gifts of any size are most welcome and gratefully received.

<https://www.supportuw.org/giveto/polisci>