

Political Science at the Mecca

Welcome from the Chair



April is a season of celebration, reflection, and well-earned pride, and nowhere is that more evident than in the accomplishments of our graduating students. To our seniors and graduate students: congratulations! You have demonstrated excellence, perseverance, and intellectual courage throughout your time in the Department of Political Science. We are immensely proud of you and excited to see the impact you will make in the world.

This year has been especially meaningful for me as I complete my first year as Chair. It has been an incredible honor to serve this Department, and I am deeply grateful to our faculty for a truly superb year. Your commitment to teaching, mentorship, research, and service continues to elevate our Department and shape the next generation of leaders and scholars.

Together, we celebrated and achieved so much. We marked the 70th anniversary of Pi Sigma Alpha, honoring a legacy of academic excellence and student leadership. Our Research Day showcased the innovative and impactful work of our students and faculty, reflecting the depth of scholarship within our community. I had the privilege of representing the Department as a panelist at the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Annual Conference, contributing to critical national conversations on politics and policy.

One of the most inspiring moments of the year was accompanying our students to meet Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, a powerful reminder of what is possible and the importance of representation at the highest levels. We were also proud to support the National Conference of Black Political Scientists, continuing Howard's historic leadership in that space, and to participate in the Southern Political Science Association Annual Conference, where our faculty and students further demonstrated the strength of our scholarly community.

This year also marked an important step in strengthening our departmental community through the launch of our first Political Science Open Houses in both the fall and spring semesters. These events created meaningful opportunities for students to engage directly with faculty, learn more about our programs, and build connections that extend beyond the classroom. The success of these gatherings reflects our commitment to accessibility, mentorship, and fostering a vibrant intellectual environment.

Equally important, our faculty have been extraordinarily active and impactful this year. They have participated in panels and conferences at Howard and across the country, hosted and created new intellectual and community-centered events, and continued to publish cutting-edge scholarship. Their work extends beyond the academy through media commentary and public engagement, helping to shape national conversations while simultaneously mentoring and elevating our students. This balance of excellence in research, teaching, and service is a hallmark of our Department.

To the Class of 2026: your achievements have not gone unnoticed. Whether in the classroom, through research, internships, leadership roles, or community engagement, you have represented the very best of Howard University. You have set a high standard for those who follow, and we celebrate you not only for what you have accomplished, but for who you are becoming.

As we close this academic year, I am filled with gratitude and pride—for our students, for our faculty, and for the collective work that continues to define this Department. Thank you all for making this year one of excellence, growth, and impact.

To our graduates, I leave you with this: you carry the legacy. You create the future.

With great pride and appreciation,
Dr. Lakeyta M. Bonnette
Chair, Department of Political Science
Howard University

Political Science at the Mecca

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT | Dr. Diarra O.
Robertson

Dr. Diarra O. Robertson is a scholar of Black Politics and Comparative Politics whose work interrogates the structural and ideological forces that shape political power, racial identity, and democratic governance in the United States. A proud product of the HBCU tradition, Dr. Robertson earned his Ph.D. in Political Science from Howard University, an M.A. from Clark Atlanta University, and a BA from Xavier University of New Orleans.

Dr. Robertson's research occupies two intersecting domains: the political dimensions of Black life in America and the authoritarian tendencies embedded within contemporary evangelical Christianity. His scholarship on evangelicalism and political power—including his peer-reviewed work “Authoritarian Drift: The Fundamentalist Tendencies of Evangelicalism from Trump to Biden” (*Journal of Power, Politics & Governance*, 2024). He has also contributed critically to the study of race and popular culture, examining the commodification and appropriation of Black artistic expression in the edited volume *Soul Thieves* (Palgrave, 2014), and to the intersections of race, crisis, and public policy in *Seeking Higher Ground* (Palgrave, 2008), edited by Manning Marable.

As a dedicated educator, Dr. Robertson brings the full weight of his scholarly expertise into the classroom through his signature courses in Black Politics and Research Methods. These courses reflect his commitment to equipping students, particularly those from historically underrepresented backgrounds, with both the analytical tools and the critical consciousness necessary to engage political systems as informed scholars and citizens. His mentorship philosophy is rooted in the conviction that rigorous research training and engaged pedagogy are among the most transformative investments an educator can make in the lives of students at minority-serving institutions.

Dr. Robertson's impact extends well beyond the classroom. He served as Chair of the Department of History and Government at Bowie State University from 2017 to 2021, during which time he provided sustained institutional leadership in support of faculty development, curricular integrity, and departmental growth. He has also demonstrated a consistent commitment to expanding educational access through competitive grant funding, including his role as Principal Investigator for an initiative to raise GRE test scores among minority and low-income students, and as Co-Investigator on the BSU Prelaw Pathway Initiative, a \$300,000 grant awarded through the Access Lexus Institute to strengthen the pipeline of students from Bowie State University into the legal profession.

A member of the American Political Science Association and the National Conference of Black Political Scientists, Dr. Robertson continues to advance scholarship that centers the experiences and political futures of Black communities. His work is distinguished by its theoretical depth, its unflinching engagement with questions of power and identity, and its enduring commitment to the students and institutions he serves.

Political Science at the Mecca

Student Highlight: Celebrating Ms. Camila Armas



We are proud to congratulate Ms. Camila Armas on her acceptance into the 2026 class of the Ralph Bunche Summer Institute at Duke University—a highly competitive and prestigious program dedicated to preparing students for doctoral study in political science.

Camila is a rising senior at Howard University majoring in political science with a minor in Spanish and is a member of the inaugural cohort of the Howard Humanities and Social Sciences Scholars Program. Her academic journey reflects a deep and sustained commitment to research, civic engagement, and public scholarship.

She previously participated in Vanderbilt University's REU program on Accountability, Behavior, and Conflict in Democratic Politics under Dr. Sharece Thrower, where she examined the effects of undocumented immigrant populations on state-level political party partisanship. As a Mellon Mays Social Justice Consortium Fellow and research intern under Dr. Marcus Board, Camila explored how urban youth of color in Washington, D.C. engage civically in response to youth curfew laws. She currently serves as an undergraduate research intern at the Ronald W. Walters Leadership & Public Policy Center, contributing to the development of a student civic engagement toolkit alongside Dr. Elsie Scott, Dr. Gabby Gray, and Kettering Fellow Raven Ridgell.

Beyond her research, Camila is an award-winning competitor on Howard's Model United Nations Team, a section writer for *The Hilltop* student newspaper, and an active student organizer. Following graduation, she plans to pursue a Ph.D. in political science, with research interests in sociopolitical development, American political development, political behavior, and race, ethnicity, and politics.

Camila now joins a distinguished community of Howard-affiliated "Bunchees," including Georgetown University's Chair of Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies, Nadia Brown (Summer 2003), Family lawyer Deja Bryant (Summer 2018), and Howard University's Political Science Chair Lakeyta Bonnette (Summer 2003), reflecting Howard's longstanding legacy within this prestigious pipeline to the professoriate.

Please join us in celebrating Camila's outstanding achievement and this important milestone in her academic journey.

Political Science at the Mecca

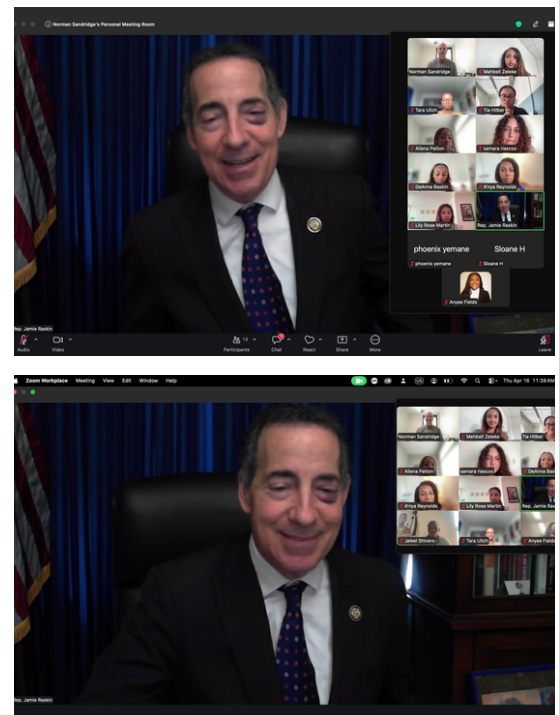
Faculty Publications and Recent Events...



Dr. Koruzhde latest article, "Explaining Saudi Arabia's Inaction During the Gaza War: Why No Oil Embargo?" just got published in Middle East Policy! [Read it here...](#)

Dr. Sandridge and Leadership Studies!

*On Thursday, April 16 Congressman Jamie Raskin visited Dr. Sandridge's Global Leadership Development course to talk about his memoir, *Unthinkable: Trauma, Truth, and the Trials of American Democracy*. The book treats Congressman Raskin's leadership from trauma (the death of his son Tommy by suicide and the January 6 Insurrection), detailing how he led the second impeachment of President Donald Trump by drawing inspiration from family members, past presidents, and Civil Rights leaders. Students talked with Congressman Raskin about how he tries to mentor people who disagree with him, how he finds hope in America even in difficult times, and how he treats everyone as an individual in spite of interacting with hundreds of different people.*



Political Science at the Mecca

Faculty Recent Events...

Pizza & P-Values: Making Political Research Accessible

This semester, Dr. Valeriia Popova and Dr. Mazaher Koruzhde led two highly engaging and innovative “Pizza & P-Values” workshops, designed to introduce students to political research in an accessible and hands-on way.

The first workshop, hosted in the Department of Political Science, brought students together for an interactive session focused on learning how to conduct political research using R. The sessions were intentionally designed for students with little to no coding or statistical experience, breaking down barriers that often prevent students from engaging with data-driven research.

Building on the success of the initial session, a second workshop was held in collaboration with Black Professionals in International Affairs, expanding the reach of the program beyond the department and connecting students to broader professional networks interested in global policy and research.

Across both workshops, Dr. Popova and Dr. Koruzhde combined theoretical insights with hands-on coding instruction, guiding students through the process of finding, analyzing, and interpreting political data. The informal and welcoming environment—complete with pizza—created a space where students felt comfortable asking questions, experimenting with new tools, and developing confidence in their research abilities.

These workshops reflect the Department's ongoing commitment to innovative teaching, experiential learning, and expanding access to research skills, while also demonstrating how faculty continue to create meaningful opportunities for student engagement both within Howard and in collaboration with external organizations.



Political Science at the Mecca

Faculty Recent Events...

thank you



Your support and generosity are greatly appreciated.



WILLIAMS & CONNOLLY LLP



Dr. Donald & Doris Johnson

Audrey Hinton
& Robert Richardson

Westminster Church

Board Members

Pat Bishop, President
Audrey Hinton, Secretary
Brian Hamilton, Treasurer



Advisory Committee

Vyllorya Evans	Clarence Lusane	Sheila Walker
Edwin Henderson III	Richard McKinney	Karen Wilkins
Marjorie Lightman	Mike Smith	Jackie Williams

PearlEscapeProject.com

Tonight's Program

6:00PM ~ Presentation, Discussion, and Q&A

7:15 PM ~ Join in a second line New Orleans-style procession led by The Pearl Band to The Wharf for a moving tribute to the Pearl passengers who risked everything for freedom.

The Pearl Band

Mark Prince, drums	Marshall Keys, alto saxophone
Thad Wilson, trumpet	Elijah Jamaal Balbed, tenor saxophone
Reginald Cyntje, trombone	Brian Hamilton, baritone saxophone

On the night of April 15, 1848, 77 enslaved men, women, and children from across the District made their way to the 7th Street pier along DC's Southwest waterfront. Silently, they boarded the Pearl, and with the rising tide, the ship set sail for freedom.

The Pearl incident was the largest organized non-violent attempt to escape enslavement recorded in pre-Civil War United States history. It energized the growing abolitionist movement in the North, strengthened African American networks in the District and linked them more closely with abolitionist sympathizers, and influenced the debate in Congress over slavery in the new Western territories.

Our pilgrimage is one of remembrance, song, and celebration.

The Pearl Escape Project
presents

The 7th Annual

Remember the Pearl!

Commemoration & Procession



Stories of Erasure & Resistance

April 15, 2026, 6PM

Westminster Church

Washington, DC

Panelists



Clarence Lusane, PhD is the Director of Howard University's International Affairs program and served as the chair of its Political Science Dept. as well. An author, activist, and scholar, his work focuses on human rights, anti-racism, US foreign policy, and social justice. He is a frequent commentator in national media.

Derek Musgrove, PhD is an Associate Professor of history specializing in post-World War II US history and African American politics. He is the author of *Rumor, Repression, and Racial Politics* and co-author of *Chocolate City*, with work featured in major outlets such as *The Washington Post* and NPR.



Cheri Blackmon is a community organizer, nonprofit founder, and emerging scholar whose work spans civic engagement and reentry justice. Cheri is pursuing a MA in Political Science at Howard University.

Kani Shaw Martin is a sophomore Political Science major at Howard University. He plans to become an attorney with a focus on international or civil law.

Simone Green is a PhD student in Political Science at Howard, focused on Black Politics. She has spent more than 24 years in project management, diversity, equity, and inclusion to deliver successful events and campaigns.

Political Science at the Mecca

Celebrating Our First In-House Research Day!

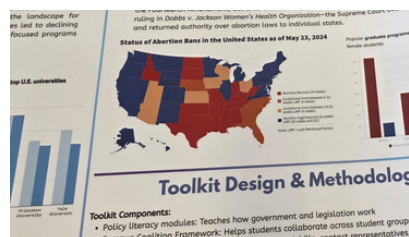
The Howard University Department of Political Science is proud to celebrate the success of our first in-house Research Day, held as part of Howard University's Research Month. This inaugural event marked an exciting milestone for our department, highlighting the depth, creativity, and impact of student scholarship.

We were especially honored to feature student researchers from the Ronald W. Walters Leadership and Public Policy Center, who presented innovative work addressing critical issues in public policy and civic engagement. Their presentations were complemented by outstanding contributions from our Political Science honors students, whose research demonstrated rigor, originality, and a strong commitment to advancing knowledge in the field.

As our first Research Day, this event represents an important step in building a vibrant culture of undergraduate research within the department. We are thrilled by its success and look forward to expanding and enhancing the program in the years ahead.

We extend our sincere appreciation to all of our faculty, staff and students for their invaluable support, participation, and dedication in making this event such a meaningful and successful experience.

We look forward to continuing to showcase the exceptional work of our students and growing this initiative in the future.



Political Science at the Mecca

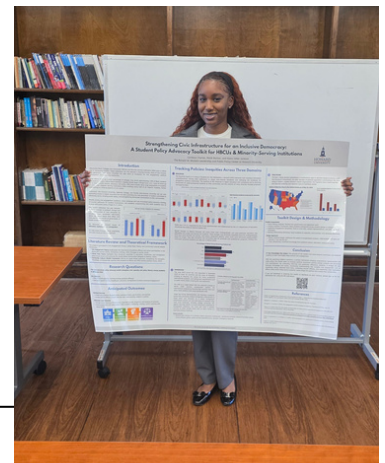
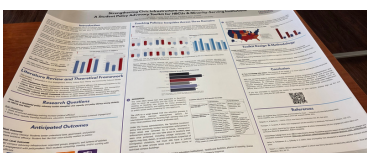
Celebrating Our First In-House Research Day: Ronald W. Walters Leadership and Public Policy Center

The Ronald W. Walters Leadership and Public Policy Center was exceptionally well represented at our inaugural Research Day in the Howard University Department of Political Science, showcasing the depth of student scholarship and commitment to civic engagement.

We are proud to highlight the outstanding work of Kiara Usher-Jackson, Malik Barton and Candace Charles (absent), who presented their poster as part of the Kettering Foundation-sponsored initiative, “Strengthening Civic Infrastructure for an Inclusive Democracy: A Student Policy Advocacy Toolkit for HBCUs and Minority Serving Institutions.” Their project reflects a powerful effort to equip students and institutions with the tools necessary to advance inclusive democratic participation and strengthen civic infrastructure.

In addition, attendees engaged in a thought-provoking conversation featuring Katia Papailler and Jayda Gray, centered on Jayda’s paper, “The Precipice of American Democracy: Strengthening Through Civics Education, Community Power, and Intentful Joy.” This discussion explored critical questions about the future of American democracy while offering innovative perspectives on the role of education, collective action, and community-centered approaches in sustaining democratic life.

Together, these presentations exemplify the mission of the Walters Center and the Department of Political Science to foster rigorous research, meaningful dialogue, and impactful civic engagement. We commend these students for their exceptional contributions and for helping to make our first Research Day a resounding success.



Political Science at the Mecca

Honors Student Research Spotlight: Elevating Undergraduate Scholarship



The Howard University Department of Political Science is proud to highlight the outstanding work of our Honors Political Science students who presented at our inaugural Research Day. Their projects reflect the depth, rigor, and critical engagement that define undergraduate research in our department.

We are especially pleased to recognize Hannah Rose Williams for her compelling thesis, “Gentrification, Campus Ecology, and the Student Experience at Howard University.” Grounded in Campus Ecology Theory, Hannah’s research examines how the rapid transformation of Washington, D.C.—particularly the Shaw neighborhood—shapes student identity, belonging, and daily life at Howard University.

Through qualitative interviews and environmental analysis of the Georgia Avenue and 4th Street corridors, her study highlights the university as an interconnected ecosystem, deeply influenced by external economic and spatial changes. Her findings identify three central dynamics shaping the Howard student experience:

- *Physical and Visual Displacement, as historic community spaces give way to luxury developments and high-cost businesses*
- *The Collegiate Housing Crisis, which pushes students farther from campus and disrupts engagement in campus life*
- *Social Alienation and Surveillance, where students report feeling scrutinized and pressured to navigate tensions with new residents*

Hannah’s work ultimately argues that gentrification operates as a “negative environmental press,” challenging the sense of belonging that is vital to student success and the preservation of Howard’s legacy as a community anchor.

We also recognize Victoria Matthews for her compelling project, “A Model for Retribution: An Analysis of San Francisco’s Local Reparations Policy and Black Displacement.” In her presentation, Victoria examined the development and implications of reparations policy efforts in San Francisco, with particular attention to how local policy initiatives seek to address historical and ongoing patterns of Black displacement. Her work contributes to broader conversations about justice, equity, and the role of local governments in advancing reparative policy frameworks.

Together, these Honors students exemplify the intellectual excellence and social commitment that define Political Science at Howard. We applaud their achievements and look forward to the continued impact of their scholarship.

Political Science at the Mecca

Upcoming events and Student Opportunities



The Institute for Constitutional Studies is pleased to announce another seminar for advanced graduate students and junior faculty:

CONSTITUTIONAL CONTROVERSIES: PRESIDENTIAL POWER



PROGRAM CONTENT:

Disputes about the breadth and limits of the president's constitutional powers have been recurrent throughout our nation's history. This discussion-based seminar will explore a series of "constitutional moments" that relate to presidential authority. After examining debates over the structure of the executive branch eventually adopted in Article II, we will consider a variety of constitutional disputes about presidential power, focusing particularly on events during the Washington, Jefferson, Jackson, Lincoln, FDR, Truman, Nixon, and Trump administrations.

INSTRUCTORS:

Maeva Marcus, a past president of the American Society for Legal History, is Research Professor of Law and Director of the Institute for Constitutional Studies at the George Washington University Law School. She serves as the general editor of the *Oliver Wendell Holmes Devise History of the Supreme Court of the United States*. Author of *Truman and the Steel Seizure Case: The Limits of Presidential Power*, she also edited the eight-volume series *The Documentary History of the Supreme Court of the United States, 1789-1800* and *Origins of the Federal Judiciary: Essays on the Judiciary Act of 1789*.

Steven Steinbach, GWU Professorial Lecturer in Law, taught United States History and American Government courses and served as History Department Chair at Sidwell Friends School in Washington, DC. Previously he was a partner in the Washington, DC, law firm of Williams & Connolly LLP, where he specialized in criminal and civil litigation.

LOGISTICS:

Meeting Time: Monday evenings, 6-8 pm

Dates: August 31; September 14, and 28; and October 5, 12, 19, and 26, 2026.

Location: The seminar will meet at The George Washington University Law School, 2000 H Street NW, Washington, DC 20052. The classroom location will be communicated at a later date.

APPLICATION PROCESS:

The seminar is designed for graduate students and junior faculty in history, political science, law, and related disciplines. All participants will be expected to complete the assigned readings and participate in seminar discussions. Although the Institute cannot offer academic credit directly for the seminar, students may be able to earn graduate credit through their home departments by completing an independent research project in conjunction with the seminar. Please consult with your advisor and/or director of graduate studies about these possibilities. Space is limited, so applicants should send a copy of their *curriculum vitae* and a short statement on how this seminar will be useful to them in their research, teaching, or professional development. Materials will be accepted only by email at icsgw@law.gwu.edu until **August 23, 2026**. Successful applicants will be notified soon thereafter. For further information, please contact Maeva Marcus at maevamarcus@law.gwu.edu.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

There is no tuition or other charge for this seminar, though participants will be expected to acquire the assigned books on their own.

ABOUT ICS:

The Institute for Constitutional Studies (ICS) is the nation's premier institute dedicated to ensuring that future generations of Americans understand the substance and historical development of the U.S. Constitution. Begun with the assistance of a challenge grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Institute is located at the George Washington University Law School. To fulfill its mission, the Institute's seminars explore the important role the Constitution has played in shaping American society.



Sixth & I is hosting a multitude of upcoming events!

Wednesday, May 27 at 7:00 pm: Senator Chris Murphy will be discussing his new book, *Crisis of the Common Good*, where he draws on history and political philosophy.

Wednesday, June 3 at 7:00 pm: Former First Lady Dr. Jill Biden will be sharing her personal experience in the White House during one of the most complicated periods in recent American memory.

Sunday, June 14 at 5:00 pm: MS NOW host Jen Psaki will be doing a live recording of her podcast, "The Blueprint with Jen Psaki."

Tuesday, July 14 at 7:00 pm: Brian Tyler Cohen, progressive independent media creator and bestselling author of *Shameless*, will be talking about his new book, *The Day After: How to Wield Power in a Post-Trump World*.



*Political Science
Class of 2026
Senior
Sendoff*



THURSDAY, APRIL 30, 2026
12:00 - 2:00 PM
DOUGLASS HALL, ROOM 221
ATTIRE: CASUAL
HOSTED BY
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

Time to Celebrate!
Join us for a
Buffet Luncheon
Recognitions
and More!



RSVP