

CENTER FOR AMERICAN POLITICAL STUDIES
HARVARD UNIVERSITY



CAPS GRADUATE DISSERTATION FELLOWS, 2015-16

Made possible by a generous grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Center for American Political Studies offers **Dissertation Fellowships (Research OR Completion) on the Study of the American Republic**. Eligible applications must contain dissertation topics with a direct engagement with the history, principles, and politics of the American Republic. These fellowships are inclusive to students inside the field of political science as well as History, English and American Literature, Philosophy, American Civilization, Sociology, Economics, Anthropology, and others - whose presence would enrich the collective discussion of enduring political, historical, and philosophical themes of the American Republic.

Supported by a bequest from **Ambassador John L. Loeb, Jr.**, the Center for American Political Studies is also offering **Dissertation Fellowships (Research OR Completion)** that explore the causes and/or consequences of religious freedom, with particular emphasis on the cultural, economic, political and social causes and implications of religious freedom.

PROGRAM ON THE STUDY OF THE AMERICAN REPUBLIC DISSERTATION FELLOWS, 2015-16

E.G. Gallwey (History, G-6)

"The Political Economy of Public Credit in the Early United States, 1776-1846"

Carly Knight (Sociology, G-6)

"The Personification of the American Corporation, 1870-2014"

Melissa Sands (Government, G-5)

"Place Value: How Context Shapes Political and Civic Behavior"

Tess Wise (Government, G-5)

"Beg, Borrow, or Steal: How the Middle Class Pays for the American Dream"

THE AMBASSADOR JOHN L. LOEB, JR. INITIATIVE ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND ITS IMPLICATIONS DISSERTATION FELLOWS, 2015-16

Christopher Allison (American Studies, G-5)

"Protestant Relics: Materiality and the Body in American and Atlantic Protestantism, 1750-1850"

John Frederick Bell (American Studies, G-5)

"First Days of Fellowship: Abolitionist Colleges and the Dilemmas of Racial and Gender Equality, 1835-1875"

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Christopher Allison (American Studies, G-5) *Amb. John L. Loeb, Jr. Initiative*

“Protestant Relics: Materiality and the Body in American and Atlantic Protestantism, 1750-1850”

My study focuses on “relics” — objects of historical and religious significance—related to a select group of venerated Protestant people of the Atlantic world (1750-1850). My project suggests that by collecting, labeling, and removing the material remnants of these exceptional people, early American Protestants were able to sacralize their collective, transnational history, access its power, and, in turn, place the firm pressure of the past on their tumultuous political present. This was expressed in a particular fixation on the holy body, which became a locus of religious meaning for a group otherwise known for their iconoclasm and disdain for material religious expression. On the one hand, this Protestant turn towards objects reveals a synchronicity with previous Catholic practice, and suggests an emergent toleration of material religious expression. But on the other hand these objects were often used as object lessons in the inexorable historical triumph of Protestantism over its Catholic and non-Christian challengers. Protestants had relics. But these objects would often tell sectarian stories in the context of a sometimes troubling 18th century marketplace of religion.

John Frederick Bell (American Studies, G-5) *Amb. John L. Loeb, Jr. Initiative*

“First Days of Fellowship: Abolitionist Colleges and the Dilemmas of Racial and Gender Equality, 1835-1875”

My dissertation illustrates the linkages between freedom of religion and freedom of education in nineteenth-century America by examining the first colleges to admit students irrespective of sex or color. Historical case studies consider four colleges, the first to attract large numbers of both female and African American students. In analyzing these colleges, my goal is to uncover the religious causes and social consequences of open admissions policies beginning in the 1830s and continuing through the 1870s, when integration and especially coeducation became more common. My project bridges the gap between the history of evangelical social reform and the history of higher education to yield new insight into the evolution of race and gender in the United States. More broadly, my project seeks to provide a historical prologue to contemporary discussions surrounding diversity in American institutions.

E.G. Gallwey (History, G-6) *Program on the Study of the American Republic*

“The Political Economy of Public Credit in the Early United States, 1776-1846”

My research examines the intellectual history of political economy in the early United States, focusing specifically on debates over the theory and practice of public credit. From Independence to the end of Jacksonian Democracy the United States confronted the problem of monetary scarcity and looked to the necessity of debt and credit to provide for defense and to support commerce and trade. From the vantage point of republican political thought historians have characterized Jeffersonian and Jacksonian approaches as symptomatic of a powerful aversion to the financial aspects of modern political economy, especially the corrupting influence of public creditors. My dissertation recasts debates about public credit, finance, and economic development by highlighting the way in which crisis of sovereignty and

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political union, international commercial competition, and the lessons of European politics, framed a much wider debate on finance than has previously been understood. Drawing on the history of science, I explore how genealogies of thought on the circulation of wealth with roots in colonial American economic thought, intersected with the changing understanding of the size of republican states. The project aims to recover the origin of ideological disputes over the role of finance and their relationship to divergent attitudes toward democracy, inequality, and the compatibility of republican government with the emerging structures of capitalism.

Carly Knight (Sociology, G-6) *Program on the Study of the American Republic*
"The Personification of the American Corporation, 1870-2014"

A question of growing importance in American public debate concerns the extent to which corporations should be considered as persons in the eyes of the law. My dissertation examines the ways in which the metaphor of the corporate person has mattered throughout American history and continues to matter now. Through a three-part analysis that combines historical and contemporary investigation, my dissertation considers the origin and causal effect of corporate personification in historical public debate, legal decisions, and contemporary public opinion. My preliminary findings reveal a surprising history. Whereas corporate personhood is now thought of nearly exclusively in terms of the expansion of corporate rights, I aim to show that the idea once held powerful implications for corporate responsibility: implications that were used to argue for increased corporate accountability in public debate, tort law, and corporate tax. In addition to this historical analysis, I use a series of survey experiments to show when and how the metaphor of corporate personhood holds implications for corporate responsibility in modern times.

Melissa Sands (Government, G-5) *Program on the Study of the American Republic*
"Place Value: How Context Shapes Political and Civic Behavior"

Despite the well-worn adage, scholars of American politics are quick to forget that "all politics is local." This fixation with national and state-level processes neglects cities, towns and communities as vital venues of political life. Local stimuli, such as attributes of one's neighborhood, shape engagement with government and politics through multiple avenues. Through a series of studies I investigate how *context* — geographic, demographic, and socioeconomic -- affects *behavior* -- political and civic -- in U.S. cities. Using experimental and quasi-experimental techniques, as well as innovative new data sources, this project explores several types of behaviors, including petition-signing, registering to vote, affiliating with parties, civic engagement, and 311 reporting.

Tess Wise (Government, G-5) *Program on the Study of the American Republic*
"Beg, Borrow, or Steal: How the Middle Class Pays for the American Dream"

Since the 1970s, wages for most middle class Americans have been stagnant. In fact, in real terms, they have declined. Meanwhile, those at the top of the income distribution have made more and more money, even as the rest of the country struggled under the weight of the largest economic crisis since the Great Depression. For middle and working class families, money is tight, but costs seem to keep

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rising. How do these families make ends meet? Increasingly, one of the most important modes is household debt—often debt with a high interest rate and poor repayment terms. In a series of interviews with families struggling with debt, I will ask Americans about the larger (often unquantifiable) costs of being in debt. What would they do differently if they didn't have debt? How has it influenced their relationships with friends and family? Their mental health? Their political beliefs? Despite the huge costs of bad debt, there has been little organized protest against these exploitative economic institutions. The lack of political pushback is striking considering that the group of Americans united by a struggle with debt represents a large group of voters—a group that, in other political systems (such as the UK and Australia) plays a larger role in coalitional politics. Therefore, my dissertation will address how politics could help these families push back against exploitative economic practices and share in the prosperity that has been accruing to wealthy Americans over the past half-century. I will also explore socioeconomic and cultural barriers to the formation of a working class-middle class alliance.