

CAPS Study of the American Republic Fellows, 2008 - 2015

Awarded for 2008-2009

Kathryn Boodry (History, G-4) Research Fellowship

"United in Credit: Atlantic Financial Relationships and the Plantation South from the Louisiana Purchase through Reconstruction."

I am applying for a research fellowship to fund my research on ties between the antebellum North, South and a larger Atlantic financial community from 1800-1860. I am interested in exploring the ways in which the North, and sundry Atlantic forms supported the perpetuation of plantations slavery in the antebellum South, and profited from commerce involving slave-produced commodities. The profits from this trade were diverted into industrial development in the North, most prominently railroads and the development of more sophisticated credit networks. I am also interested in how the development of these networks and relationships led to the emergence of a larger Atlantic financial community that became quite savvy at moving credit, money and goods across a rapidly expanding world system.

Amber Moulton-Wiseman (African and African American Studies, G-4) Research Fellowship

"Marriage Extraordinary: Interracial Marriage and the Politics of Family in Antebellum Massachusetts"

My dissertation, entitled "Marriage Extraordinary: Interracial Marriage and the Politics of Family in Antebellum Massachusetts," examines the political and social history of interracial marriage in the antebellum North from approximately 1831, when radical abolitionists in Massachusetts initiated a state-wide campaign to repeal a longstanding ban on interracial marriage, through the Civil War, when the political salience of interracialism in the North informed new racial and interracial politics in the post-Emancipation South. Standing at a critical and transformative moment in the histories of abolitionism, women's rights, and republican politics, northern debates over interracial marriage provide a unique lens into the fabric of antebellum society. This dissertation research fellowship will fund a year of intensive research in local, state, and national petitions, government documents, newspapers, and manuscript collection, and I look forward to sharing the fruits of my research with the CAPS community.

Awarded for 2009-2010

Emily Conroy-Krutz (History, G-3) Research Fellowship

"The Conversion of the World in the Early Republic"

My dissertation, "The Conversion of the World in the Early Republic," looks at the first six decades of American foreign missionary activity with an attention to the national, racial, gender, and imperial politics that movement reveals. While American evangelicals in 1790 followed the progress of British missionaries in South Asia with great interest, by 1848, they supported their own vibrant movement, with missionaries stationed in North and South America, Asia, Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and the islands of the Pacific. This movement introduced many Americans to the rest of the globe in profound new ways; the project of global conversion gave evangelical Christians a stake in the state of the world. This is a particularly exciting movement in that it provides a lens through which to view the early republican struggle between

republican and imperial forms of governance. Over the years of my study, American missionaries engaged in the colonization of West Africa by free African Americans, debated Indian Removal from the Southeast, and saw their mission to the Native Americans in the Rocky Mountain region become a major stopping point on the overland trail to Oregon. It is my hope that this dissertation will contribute to the developing historiography of a transnational early republic.

Emily Hickey (Government, G-4) Research Fellowship

"Call and Response: Congressional Communication and Citizen Contact"

Taking the maxim that members of congress are single-minded seekers of re-election seriously, we must look beyond the yeas and nays. In order to do this, my project examines the communication patterns of members of Congress, and constituent recall of these behaviors. It is important to examine both the objective facts of congressional communication and constituent recall of these communications, as these behaviors don't carry much weight if citizens do not see them, and that lack of recall has implications for member behavior. The project examines survey data and original primary sources in order to understand both sides of the constituent-representative relationship. This project utilizes a number of different analytical techniques and data sources. The first component of the dissertation is the Cooperative Congressional Election Studies of 2006, 2007, and 2008. I complement this new survey data with additional original data from primary sources. I have collected and am planning to analyze the disclosures of the Members' Representational Allowance from 2006-2008. A key component of this data is the reports on mass mailings, which include the number of pieces of substantially similar mail, such as newsletters or constituent surveys, sent by members of Congress. In addition to the raw numbers of traditional mailings, I am also examining the content of these newsletters. I have collected a number of traditional newsletters for a pilot study of newsletter content, and plan to return to Washington to increase the sample size to better understand how members present themselves to their constituents. The financing from the Center for American Political Studies Dissertation Research Fellowship will relieve me from teaching obligations in my fifth year, allowing me the time and financial flexibility to focus on the analysis of my data and clear progress on my dissertation. This fellowship will also expose me to a community of scholars who will help me in improving my dissertation, as well as help me better understand the interdisciplinary aspects and new modes of analysis for the study of American politics.

Awarded for 2010-2011

John Huffman (History, G-6) Research Fellowship

"Americans on Paper: Documents and Identity in the Early United States and their World, ca. 1775-1815"

My dissertation examines the role of identification and identification papers in the construction of the early American republic (ca. 1775-1815). The American Revolution brought with it an immediate crisis of identification. The new republican governments struggled to identify the newly created citizens they claimed to govern and at the same time separate patriots from loyalists and distinguish friends from spies, other enemy agents, and confidence tricksters. Potential citizens and confederates themselves had to determine not only where their loyalties lay but also how they might prove their rights, status, and character, or their identity more generally. When the Revolution had passed, the imperatives of identification pressed no less

urgently. Facing the challenges of governance and threats to their independence and authority, the new states used identification documents as one means by which to construct themselves as sovereigns both at home and abroad and establish or reconstitute governance of their populations. Meanwhile merchants, civic organizations, and slaveholders sought ways to regulate movement, police membership, evaluate character, and control social and financial privileges. Individuals of all types looked for means to construct their own identities as portable resources in an increasingly mobile, populous, and complex society and the wide world its members traveled. Discussion of *identity* is now common in early American studies. But identity has been almost exclusively approached as subjective identity – a matter of self-perception. My dissertation provides a new perspective on identity in the early republic by focusing on identity in practice. In doing so it will help advance our understanding of how the early republic was made real as a society and a polity.

Clayton Nall (Government, G-7) Completion Fellowship

“The Road to Division: How Interstate Highways Partition Communities and Polarize Politics”

The dissertation uniquely contributes to the multidisciplinary study of American politics by focusing on a neglected topic: the influence of “spatial policies,” or programs that change citizens’ spatial relationships with one another, on the organization and development of politics in American communities. In a book-length research project, it considers how the largest public works program in American history – the Interstate Highway System – influenced the evolution of politics in American metropolitan areas and explains why partisans of the respective parties have adopted different policy attitudes since the 1950s. While many scholars have considered how federal policies influence politics, their attention has turned to the effects of welfare-state programs like Social Security or the G.I. Bill on individual citizens. But many instances of federal policy, ranging from military base closing decisions to “urban renewal,” are applied at the community level and affect individuals by changing their political context. In focusing on the Interstate Highway System, my dissertation considers one instance of this broader set of policies.

Awarded for 2011-2012

Yael Merkin (History, G-4) Research Fellowship

“Untying the Gilded Corset: A New Approach to New York’s Female Elite”

My dissertation exposes the power wielded by Gilded Age New York’s elite women, exploring the political, economic, and social capital that they imported into their marriages, and which undergirded the formation of the city’s upper class. It will excavate the power accorded to wealthy women whose lavish homes served as offices in their own right, and whose social calls, public spectacles of leisure, and philanthropic activities were as much an obligation of their status and station as their husbands’ dutiful engagement in the rarefied and opaque world of finance, commerce, and municipal and political administration. Within a fluid high society riven by discord—as a newly emergent cadre of financial entrepreneurs and manufacturers attempted to infiltrate a resentful and judgmental mercantile old guard—elite women’s politics of inclusion and exclusion, I will argue, were as indispensable to their families’ prospects, and the very survival of the New York elite, as their male counterparts’ more literal accumulation of wealth. I aim to demonstrate that wealthy women’s activities and occupations were as much political as they were social, as public as they were private.

Josie Rodberg (History, G-6) Research Fellowship

"Human Rights, Women's Rights, States' Rights: The Politics of Federally-Funded Family Planning Programs in the United States, 1965-1988"

My dissertation examines the shaping of government family planning policy over more than two decades of dramatic political change. I argue that, although many Americans now think of government-supported birth control programs as a progressive addition to the health care safety net, in fact conservative reactions to significant social changes in the 1960s and 1970s were the most important determinant of family planning policy. The first federal family planning programs grew out of the mid-1960s "war on poverty," as a way to restore earlier patterns of heterosexual, two-parent, economically self-supporting families. Concerns about rising welfare rolls, urban unrest, and increasing rates of female-headed households such as those outlined in the 1963 Moynihan Report drove the establishment of federal funding sources for birth control between 1965 and 1970. All of these issues were clearly linked to the growing African-American urban population and to concern about the civil rights upheavals that were spreading in northern cities.

Shauna Shames (Government, G-4) Research Fellowship

"Political Ambition and the Expectations of Eligible Candidates"

The United States is a country of astonishing diversity, yet public offices continue to be overwhelmingly dominated by white men. Women, who are more than half of U.S. citizens, hold less than a quarter of its political offices. People of color are a (growing) third of the population, yet hold only about a tenth of elected political positions. Time alone is not solving this problem of underrepresentation; in the past two decades, gains for both women and racial/ethnic minorities have been only incremental and have sometimes reversed course. Democratic theory and empirical research emphasize the harms that such disproportional representation does to our democracy. My project proposes a new perspective and new tools for investigating and better understanding the lack of race and gender diversity among elected representatives. My preliminary research and anecdotal evidence suggest that many potential candidates give up before they try, and that the early-quitters group is skewed by both race and gender. The key question for political science – and for our democracy – is why.

Daniel Volmar (History of Science, G-4) Research Fellowship

"The Power of the Atom: Nuclear Command, Control, and Communications in the Department of Defense, 1958-1986"

Despite receiving relatively little publicity in comparison with weapons development and strategic doctrine, Cold War debates concerning nuclear command and control—organizational problems such as planning, management, training, and communications—were similarly urgent in their historical context. My historical approach accentuates the postwar Department of Defense as a hybrid organization, which gathered together civilian administrators, military professionals, and scientific-technical personnel under one large umbrella. The dispersion of systems and practices among central DOD agencies and their subordinate military services gradually disconnected the reality of nuclear operations from the discourse of nuclear politics, a disturbing trend that partially motivated the defense reorganization debates of the 1980s. The dissertation's conclusion will reflect on the rise of academic "command and control studies" as a

new form of technical expertise, drawing from civil, military, and scientific practices even as it sought to resolve their inconsistencies.

Awarded for 2012-13

Deirdre Bloome (Social Policy and Sociology, G-6) Research Fellowship
“Economic Inequality, Mobility, and Opportunity in the United States”

My dissertation explores the interplay between economic inequality and economic mobility and opportunity in the United States. A foundational American principle maintains that individuals should have opportunities to succeed, regardless of family background. Historically, equal opportunities have been seen as the American alternative to equal rewards. Today, some academics and policymakers have come to question the extent to which we can neatly separate the two, since parents' rewards shape children's life chances. Yet, the scholarly literatures documenting patterns in the distribution of economic resources across individuals (inequality) and the connection between individuals' economic resources in childhood and adulthood (mobility) remain largely disconnected from one another. My dissertation works to bridge this divide.

Jennifer Page (Government, G-4) Research Fellowship
“Reparations: History, Theory, and Practice”

The purpose of my dissertation is to establish that there will always be the need for a backward-looking conception of justice—and therefore monetary reparations—within liberal democracies. This, I argue, is the logical upshot of taking seriously J.S. Mill's notion that social progress is inherent to liberalism. However, reparations movements for colonial-era injustices like slavery, Indian land removal, etc. are unique to the 20th century. In the historical chapter of my dissertation, I look at how the meaning of “reparation” has evolved from the war spoils of a victor intent on punishing his enemy to a social justice demand of marginalized groups.

Bernardo Zacka (Government, G-6) Research Fellowship
“Personifying the State: An Inquiry into the Everyday Moral Life of Street-Level Bureaucrats”

My dissertation explores the everyday moral life of street-level bureaucrats – frontline workers who effectively serve as mediators between citizens and the state. The first part of the dissertation draws on empirical studies of public agencies and on debates in political theory to assess the scope of the discretion that such workers have, and to suggest how we could account for it in a normative theory of the state. The second part of the dissertation examines the challenges in moral psychology that frontline workers must face on a day-to-day basis. These workers are expected to be, at the same time, faceless representatives of an impersonal institution (the state), and responsive participants in face-to-face encounters with particular clients. I argue that reconciling these two aspects of the job leads to a host of difficulties, as a result of which street-level bureaucrats are often driven towards one of three reductive conceptions of their role: indifference, care-giving, or enforcement. I devote the last and most extensive part of the dissertation to exploring the ways in which managerial strategies, organizational culture, and practices of the self can be deployed to help street-level bureaucrats retain a balanced and multi-faceted understanding of their responsibilities.

Awarded for 2013-14

Claire Dunning (History, G-4) Research Fellowship

"The Privatization of Progress: How the Nonprofit Sector Did (And Did Not) Reshape American Cities"

My dissertation examines the evolving position of nonprofit organizations in urban democratic governance between the 1960s and 1990s. I argue that, starting in the 1960s, the American welfare state entered a new era in which the federal government channeled public dollars to private organizations and charged them with responsibilities previously held by public entities. While others have charted the growth of the nonprofit sector at the national level, my research looks at the consequences of such growth at the municipal and neighborhood levels through a historical study of a single city. Boston is the key location for this study, and I draw on archival records from government, nonprofit, and philanthropic collections for this research. Given nonprofit activity in areas as diverse as community development, education, healthcare, job training, social services, and youth programming, analyzing the local dynamics of this sector is crucial to understanding urban change and the privatization of the American welfare state in the closing decades of the twentieth century.

Jeremy Levine (Sociology, G-6) Research Fellowship

"A Seat at the Table: Power, Politics, and Inner City Redevelopment"

My dissertation is an ethnography of redevelopment politics in Boston. Since 2010, I have followed the redevelopment of the Fairmount Corridor, a 9-mile stretch of land spanning the neighborhoods of Roxbury, Dorchester, Mattapan, and Hyde Park. My fieldwork focuses primarily on the work of redevelopment elites--government officials, nonprofit developers, consultants, and powerful foundations--as they make decisions in an increasingly decentralized urban development industry. My research focuses on questions of power and influence over redevelopment plans, but I am also analyzing how culture informs political debates, how elites make complicated geographies legible for intervention, and the political role of nonprofit organizations in urban neighborhoods. My dissertation pulls back the curtain on previously hidden, private conversations between individuals and institutions deciding how redevelopment unfolds in the inner city. By studying the dynamics of inner city redevelopment on the ground, this research will illuminate the barriers to residents' full inclusion in the policymaking process.

Maxwell Palmer (Government, G-4) Research Fellowship

"Time and Political Power"

My dissertation studies the creation, duration, and use of political power and leadership positions in legislatures and other institutions. I develop a formal model that illustrates how limited plenary time motivates legislators to create leadership positions to manage the legislative calendar. I show how legislators generally prefer organization and leadership in order to ensure that high priority bills are taken up in the legislative session. I use this model to evaluate the initial role of the Speaker of the House in the first sessions of the U.S. Congress, and to consider how elections for leadership positions can polarize a non-partisan legislature and lead to the development of political parties. I also extend this work to leadership and agenda setting on other deliberative bodies, including corporate boards of directors.

Vanessa Williamson (Government, G-5) Research Fellowship

"The Purse of the People: Support for Taxation in the American States"

My dissertation focuses on when and why Americans are supportive of taxation. I am interested not only in the potential policy implications of this research, but in the paying of taxes as a political act in itself. For most Americans, paying taxes is by far their most regular participation in political life. Moreover, the legitimacy of taxation is bound to the quality of representation; taxation is, after all, the investment of a people in the shared task of governance. Yet we know relatively little about what leads people to see their taxes as an investment worth making. My approach will examine both tax opinion at the individual level, and the larger contexts in which taxes are politically successful.

Awarded for 2014-15

John Harpham (Government, G-4) Research Fellowship

"Slavery: The History of a Political Idea"

My dissertation examines the political philosophy of slavery in America. It concentrates on the antebellum period, although its most basic claim is that slavery persists as a central political concept throughout much of Western history, and that during this time theories of slavery are marked more by continuity than rupture. The American proslavery argument represents, not the aberrant product of an anomalous culture, as many previous scholars have assumed, but an uneasy attempt to draw together several traditions in the philosophy of slavery, each of which has its roots in the ancient world. My dissertation identifies these traditions, and analyzes the way in which southern intellectuals, jurists, politicians, novelists, and clergymen fashioned from these traditions what we must hope will be the world's last and most vigorous defense of slavery, in the decades before the Civil War. This is an historical project that is of more than purely historical interest. We speak a great deal in America about the dilemmas posed by race, but what we struggle with most of all is the legacy of slavery—not only of its practice, but of the idea that it was morally and politically right.

Alex Hertel-Fernandez (Government, G-5) Research Fellowship

"Corporate Mobilization Across the American States, 1973-2013"

My thesis examines the rise of business groups in state politics since the 1970s, arguing that they constitute a new and important form of corporate political mobilization. Drawing on a rich array of archival materials, quantitative data, and interviews, this dissertation will answer the following research questions: Why did businesses decide to start mobilizing at the state level in the 1970s? How did they manage their coalition with conservative activists? What strategies did the businesses and conservative activists use in their state level mobilization? In what states and under what conditions were these groups most successful at changing legislation? Which businesses were most involved in the turn to the states? And how do these new state-based corporate lobbying groups compare with more traditional business associations in the United States, like the Chamber of Commerce or the Business Roundtable? My findings carry implications for our understanding of business influence in politics, how political coalitions form and are maintained over time, and how political associations shape the behavior of their members.

Benjamin Schneer (Government, G-5) Research Fellowship
“A Study of Political Expression and Its Consequences”

My dissertation asks: What determines how and when individuals engage in political expression? How do elites—in the media and in Congress—receive these political expressions? Effective transmission of policy preferences between citizens and lawmakers is fundamental to a well-functioning democracy. Previous research in political behavior has focused heavily on using public opinion surveys to determine what people think, while focusing less on precisely by what means people communicate their opinions and preferences to each other and to lawmakers. How opinions are communicated—including mode of expression, processes of editing and redaction, timing, etc.—has bearing on the extent of their political influence. I develop several new data sources to reveal how people employ forms of political communication to respond to and to influence what is on the agenda in Congress and in the media. The first chapter uses data constructed from the full text of the Congressional Record to study petitioning; the second chapter uses all twitter posts since December 2012 to study the relationship between media and online political expressions; the third chapter employs a full text data set of editorial submissions to a newspaper to study how media elites filter political expression.

Beth Truesdale (Sociology, G-5) Research Fellowship
“Finding the ‘Sweet Spots’ where Evidence Matters”

My project examines the relationship between science and child and family policy in the United States and Britain. I interview people in the policy and research communities – politicians, civil servants, think tank staff, advocates, researchers, and academics – to discover how and when evidence becomes part of the policy process. I also use public records such as speeches, policy papers, memos, and media reports to create a map of evidence and influence. My research focuses on the system characteristics that influence the uptake of data and scientific evidence; the pathways and processes by which usable knowledge makes its way into the policy arena; and the roles played by different types of evidence. This research will improve our knowledge of the relationship between evidence and policy. I hope it will also prove useful to both researchers and policy people who are working toward more effective and more equitable social policies.

Ariel White (Government, G-5) Research Fellowship
"Measuring the Political Spillovers from Punitive Policies"

Incarceration and deportation are at near-record levels. My dissertation uses new data sources and natural experiments to measure the political consequences for those who are impacted, though not targeted, by punitive government policies. These include: neighbors/relatives of the incarcerated, neighborhoods with heavy police presence, and voting-eligible citizens whose undocumented neighbors face deportation risks. The spillover effects of punitive interactions could be many times larger than the direct individual effects. Understanding these spillover effects of government policies is crucial for democratic decision-making, and will also yield academic dividends as we better understand political participation.