Studying Political Behavior in Turbulent Times. Stony Brook University, May 30-31, 2024
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1. Abstract

This conference will bring together a mix of senior and junior political behavior scholars. Political behavior is an extremely active and highly quantitative research area within political science representing scholars who study public opinion, electoral choice, and voting behavior. The conference will focus on key topics in contemporary political behavior including the 2024 US presidential, public support for democracy, political polarization, and the state of public opinion polling. The Political Science Department at Stony Brook University is an international leader in this subfield, earning recognition for the development of psychological approaches to the study of human political behavior.[1] The department has recently rebuilt at the junior and senior level and the conference provides an opportunity to integrate junior faculty into the broader political behavior community. The conference has strong intellectual goals. It is designed to share new research findings, identify gaps in current research, and chart new directions in the study of American democracy. The conference will include ample time for dialogue that will create the conditions for the development of fruitful collaborations and generate ideas for potential grant applications.

SBU Political Science faculty will play a major role in the conference. We will include other SBU quantitative social scientists with political research interests. Relevant faculty in Sociology include Kathleen Fallon (public support for women politicians) Jennifer Heerwig (political donations and inequality), and Yongjun Zhang (computational methods applied to social and political behavior). In Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (WGSS) relevant faculty include Joanna Wuest (politics of the LGBTQ movement), and Nancy Hiemstra (immigration policy). Social science faculty have not had existing opportunities to meet regularly, and the conference will connect researchers interested in common topics and approaches to the study of political behavior.

The conference is primarily aimed at researchers in political science who study democratic publics. Requests for applications will be distributed through the EPOVB section of the APSA which has over 800 members and includes both junior and senior scholars. The conference will include 80-100 attendees; roughly 60 of those will be from outside institutions. The conference format includes a mix of plenary sessions, research paper presentations, poster sessions, and mentoring workshops for junior scholars. The conference will include two plenary sessions. The first will focus on the study of public support for democracy and feature James Druckman, Martin Brewer Anderson Professor of Political Science at Rochester University, and James Gibson, Sidney W Souers Professor of Government at Washington University. Both are leading experts in this area of research and their work attracts extensive external funding. The second session will address the state of survey research and polling, focusing on the success of the polls in the leadup to the 2024 election. Sunshine Hillygus, Professor of Politics at Duke University, has tentatively agreed to speak about the current state of survey research, and Valerie Bradley, the lead survey scientist for the Biden campaign, has expressed interest in discussing the accuracy of the 2024 pre-election polls.

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[1] The SBU Political Science Departments was in the top 30 graduate programs in political science in the 2022 US News & World Report rankings.