



## Highlights from PGH

- 80 Political Science Majors graduated in May 2011: Congratulations!
- In the 2010-11 academic year UH students earned 7 master's degrees in Political Science and 5 doctorates.
- 14 graduate students from 4 countries entered our MA and PhD programs in fall 2011.

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## Letter from the Chair

Welcome to the first issue of *UH PoliSci Now!* This is a newsletter for alumni and friends of UH Political Science. We want to use this forum to let you know what our students, alumni and faculty have been up to, and report on some of the interesting events in our Department.

It is exciting for me that we are launching this newsletter at the same time that I am starting my new job as Chair of the Political Science Department. It is a great time to be at the helm of

this Department! We have a young and energetic faculty body, and large and growing undergraduate and graduate enrollments, with many ambitious and talented students who are winning awards and making a difference to their communities. At the same time our University continues to set new milestones in educational excellence, gaining national and international recognition for the quality of its research and teaching.

There is much good news to



share, and I look forward to bringing it to you in future issues of *UH PoliSci Now!* I also look forward to hearing from you, and to meeting Political Science alumni and friends at upcoming events.

—Susan Scarrow  
sscarrow@uh.edu

## Welcome New Faculty!

We are pleased to welcome two new faculty members who are joining us in Fall 2011.

**Beth Simas** is a scholar of American electoral behavior, with a special interest in Congressional Elections.

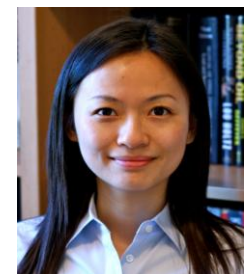


**Beth Simas**

She will be teaching courses on Political Parties, Elections, and Public Opinion. Professor Simas just completed her doctorate at the University of California, Davis.

Ling Zhu is an expert on public administration and public policy with a particular interest in health care issues, including childhood obesity. Originally from Shanghai, China, she completed a master's degree at Purdue University before finishing her doctorate in Political Science at Texas A&M.

Professor Zhu will be teaching courses in the Masters of Public Administration Program and in the Political Science Department.



**Ling Zhu**

## Fostering Undergraduate Research

Our department values and mentors our undergraduate students! As part of our teaching, we are actively involved in undergraduate research through UH's Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF) and Provost Undergraduate Research Scholarship (PURS) programs.

After working closely last year with **Assistant Professor Ryan Kennedy** on a SURF and PURS project that investigated leadership transition in terrorist networks, **Matt Dickenson** not only then completed an award-winning senior thesis on this topic, but also presented his research at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. He is now in his first year of graduate studies at Duke University.

This past summer **Assistant Professor Lydia Tiede** worked with **Rachel Farhi** who created her own data set to analyze cases of corruption of public officials prosecuted by the Department of Justice's Public Integrity Unit. Rachel is continuing her project with Professor Tiede in the PURS program this fall. Two other students, **Catrina Kim** and **Andy Sapp Hamilton**, worked on SURF projects with **Associate Professor Susan Collins**. These projects focused on the Ancient understanding of civic education.

This fall, through a PURS award, **Krystafer Redden** will work with **Assistant Professor Jeff Church** on the idea of culture in

continental thought; Krystafer also pursued a SURF project with Professor Collins in the summer of 2010.

The benefits of this kind of mentorship are clear in our students' successes. Krystafer was appointed by Governor Perry to be the state student representative on the Board of Higher Education. He, Rachel, Catrina, and Andy all plan to do senior honors theses and postgraduate studies in law or political science.

And Matt Dickenson is enjoying immensely his first year at Duke. In fact, when you get a chance, you should check out his blog "You Study Politics, right?" at [http://yspr.wordpress.com/about/!](http://yspr.wordpress.com/about/)

### Alumni Spotlight

In October Catherine Cauvin-Higgins (MA '86) was in Houston for the showing of *Bonjour Farewell*, a real-life spy thriller movie based on a book she translated from the French. Cauvin-Higgins credits her UH professors for sparking her interest in Cold War politics which led to her involvement with this project: "My years at U of H ('83-'86) as a student and a TA (for Joe Nogee, Ray Duch and Dick Murray) are among my dearest memories of Houston."

## Award-Winning Advising

In spring 2011 **Dr. Edward Manouelian** was honored with the New Professional Advising Award for undergraduate advising. A member of the Political Science advising team since January 2008, he serves both the undergraduate and the graduate program. A Slavic linguist by training, and avidly interested in learning new languages, Dr. Manouelian greets students in at least 10 languages.

He is the "front line" contact for students interested in our graduate program, guiding them through the various stages of application and

admissions, and helping them with orientation, registration, and every day advice once they arrive. As an undergraduate advisor he helps majors secure the courses they need to graduate, and steers them towards professors whose interests match their own. Above all, Dr. Manouelian tries to help students build a bridge between academic studies and professional opportunities, offering counseling on various career paths open to graduates in Political Science.



**Edward Manouelian  
(with Frida the cat)**

## Faculty News and Noteworthy

**Brandon Rottinghaus** was promoted to Associate Professor as of the 2011-12 academic year. Professor Rottinghaus is a specialist on the American presidency, executive-legislative relations and public opinion. His most recent book, *The Provisional Pulpit: Modern Presidential Leadership of Public Opinion* (Texas A&M University Press), argues that presidents are conditionally effective at leading public opinion. This work has been mentioned in *USA Today*, *US News & World Report*, the *National Journal* and other outlets.

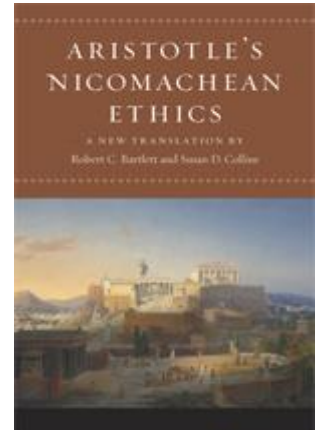
**Professor Victor Mote** retired in May 2011. Professor Mote is a geographer who specializes

in Russia and Siberia. He joined the University of Houston Geography Department in 1971, which later merged with Political Science. He taught courses on Geography and American Government, and served as Undergraduate Director in Political Science from 2005 through 2009.

**Associate Professor Susan Collins** and her Boston College colleague Rob Bartlett have just published a new translation of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (Chicago University Press). The translation and interpretive essay received a rave review in the *New York Times* Sunday book review section.

At this year's APSA meetings **Assistant Professor Ryan Kennedy** and his co-authors were awarded the Heinz I. Eulau prize for the best article published in the *American Political Science Review* in the past year. The article, "Who Wants to Deliberate – and Why?," finds in a unique set of experiments that Americans are surprisingly willing to participate in deliberative democracy. Moreover, they find that the people who are most interested in participating in deliberation are often the same people who are least likely to be involved with other types of democratic participation.

In May 2011 **Assistant Professor Jeronimo**



**Cortina's** Project on Migration, Development collaboration with UNICEF and UN/DESA published a factsheet on Adolescents, Youth and International Migration which was distributed at the United Nations General Assembly Informal Thematic Debate on International Migration.

## Graduate Student Spotlight

On Labor Day weekend three Political Science graduate students presented their research at this year's American Political Science Association Meetings in Seattle, WA. **Michelle Belco** presented "Executive Preemption: When Presidents Issue Unilateral Orders in Lieu of Legislation," (co-author Professor Brandon Rottinghaus). **Aldo Ponce** presented "Rethinking Party Membership: Towards a Functional Measurement Strategy," (co-author Professor Susan Scarrow). **Alan Steinberg** presented "Talking to terrorists-A Formal Model," (co-author Professor Scott Basinger).

Congratulations to fourth year doctoral student **Aldo Ponce** for winning a College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences Dissertation Completion Scholarship. These new awards were created to help promising students focus on research in the final year of their studies. They are generously underwritten by the Houston Endowment and the Delores Mitchell Welder Endowed Scholarship Fund in the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences. Aldo's research examines conditions in Latin American legislatures that promote or undermine stable party systems.

Recent publications by

current UH graduate students include: **George Hawley** "Political Threat and Immigration: Party Identification, Demographic Context, and Immigration Policy Preferences," *Social Science Quarterly* vol. 91, no. 2; **Aldo Ponce** and Professor Susan Scarrow, "Who Gives? Political Donations in Europe," *West European Politics* vol. 34, no. 5; Professor Eduardo Aleman, **Aldo Ponce** and **Iñaki Sagorzazu** (PhD 2010), "Legislative Parties in Volatile Non-Programmatic Party Systems: The Peruvian Case in Comparative Perspective," *Latin American Politics and Society* vol. 53, no. 3

### Congratulations to our students who earned their doctorates in 2010-11!

**Linda Clark**  
Public Policy

**Thanapan Laiprakobsup**  
Comparative Politics

**Ronald McCowan**  
American Politics

**Anna Mikulska**  
Comparative Politics

**Scott Robinson**  
Political Theory

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## Research that Matters: How do Judges Decide?

Do judges' political party identifications ever affect the way they decide certain cases? Most Public Law scholars would answer "yes" to that question. And after the presidential election of 2000 when the four liberal members of the Supreme Court voted for Albert Gore and the five conservative members supported George Bush, most average Americans would also likely concede that partisanship affects judicial voting.

**Professor Robert Carp** has been studying this question for many years, trying to test empirically whether federal trial judges' background characteristics, such as their party I.D., gender, race, and age affect the way they decide cases. Since 1970 he

has read and coded over 100,000 cases taken from the *Federal Supplement*, the primary outlet for U.S. trial court opinions. The data set contains background data on about 1500 U.S. trial judges who have held court since 1933 and on 27 types of cases they have decided. For example, there are cases dealing with civil rights, disputes involving the rights of criminal defendants, issues of labor-management conflict, and cases dealing with government regulation of the economy.

Professor Carp's studies have established that in the vast majority of cases, the background of the judges is not a determinative factor. However for cases where precedents are unclear or



conflicting, and with issues for which Congress has provided little guidance, the judges' backgrounds are causal factors in their decision making.

Professor Carp teaches in the area of judicial process and constitutional law. He is the author of five books and forty-seven articles published in refereed journals. His judicial data is widely used by other scholars in his field.

## Share the (PoliSci) News!

Share this first issue of *UH PoliSci Now!* We do not have a comprehensive e-mail list for Political Science alumni, **so we need your help in spreading the word.** Please send an e-mail with a link to this newsletter to friends and fellow alumni who may be interested. They can subscribe by contacting us at [PoliticalScience@uh.edu](mailto:PoliticalScience@uh.edu).

In addition to sending out these newsletters 2 or 3 times per year, we will use this list to send occasional notices about public lectures and other public events sponsored by the UH Department of Political Science that may be of interest to Political Science Alumni. We promise that we won't send out many e-mails on these lists, and we will

not give the addresses to other organizations.

You can find out more about what is happening in the Political Science Department at our web page: [www.polsci.uh.edu](http://www.polsci.uh.edu). You can also contact us at [PoliticalScience@uh.edu](mailto:PoliticalScience@uh.edu) and share news about what you are doing. We look forward to hearing from you!