

# Department of Political Science

## OUTSTANDING STUDENT AWARD WINNERS



Tanner Sarauer, Student

Congratulations to Tanner Sarauer and Hector Ortega for receiving the Political Science department's outstanding student award this year. Both Tanner and Hector distinguished themselves academically in beginning with their very first introductory courses in Political Science. Of Tanner, Dr. Thomas said, "I realized in introduction to American government and politics, that Tanner was a force to be reckoned with. His enthusiasm, knowledge, and willingness to engage politics was noticeably impressive even as a freshman." Similarly, Dr. Thomas said, "Hector also distinguished himself in his very first Political Science class as a freshman. In his quest-one course (Environmental Politics and Sustainability), he set a high standard for his classmates in written and oral communication as well as critical and creative thinking."

When asked about his time in the Political Science department, Tanner said, "It feels like yesterday that I still thought I wanted to be a teacher. It took one Political Science class during my freshman year to help me realize my passion for this field. Since then, I dove headfirst into my degree, and I owe it to the professors of the department for getting me to where I am today. No matter the help I needed, whether in life or in the classroom, they were always there to help me find an answer. You can tell each and every one of them cares about their students so much by their approach in the classroom and communication outside of it, and that truly is what has nurtured my success in Political Science." Hector said, "I've enjoyed being able to do lots of interdisciplinary work, drawing from other subjects like philosophy, world religions, sociology, international studies, history, foreign language, and fine arts, all of which I have been able to incorporate into different projects in my major."



Hector Ortega, Student

After graduation, Tanner will attend law school at University of Wisconsin Madison, with plans to practice law in Wisconsin. Hector, after taking a gap year, plans to pursue a PhD in comparative studies focusing on discourse and society. The Political Science department is confident that both will excel in their post-UWO studies because of the skills they developed and displayed while they were here. Dr. Thomas said, "one of my greatest joys is watching students grow over many years and seeing them interact with one another in the classroom. When I had Tanner and Hector in class at the same time, conversations were always elevated. It's as if they fed off one another, each challenging the other to be even more engaged. I'm thrilled that the two of them get to share the outstanding student distinction together."

## LEADERSHIP AWARD WINNER

Graduating senior, Hector Ortega is the 2023 recipient of the Political Science department's leadership award. Hector is a leader both in and out of the classroom. He has worked in various capacities helping other students not only in Political Science but also music and Spanish. He has worked on campus as a tutor, clinic counselor, and supplemental instruction leader. During his senior year, he worked with two different Political Science professors' classes—Dr. David Siemers and Dr. Jerry Thomas—to provide supplemental instruction for students in American government and politics. Dr. Thomas notes the rapport Hector built with students, not only because of his excitement and command over the material, but also because of his genuine desire to help students.



Hector Ortega, Student

Outside of the Political Science department and campus, Hector has worked in the community on the communications team for Roots4Change Co-op. There, he helped publish newsletters for Spanish-speaking families about news, culture, politics, art, history, and health. He also created children's activities incorporating Latino/indigenous music, literature, history, and art.

When asked to reflect on his experiences at UWO, Hector said, "It's my hope that I can use the leadership opportunities I've had from campus and the community to give back and help others, no matter which career path I take. I aim to be a strong role model for people who look like me and come from similar backgrounds as me." After graduating from UWO this spring, Hector will take a gap year to gain more community-oriented experiences. Hector says that he wants to show that "a leader can have many different interests, upbringings, hobbies, and aspirations without taking away from the qualities of being a leader."



Four students were inducted this spring into the National Political Science Honor Society. *"Pi Sigma Alpha, the National Political Science Honor Society, is the only honor society for college students of Political Science and government in the United States."*

The inductees are juniors or seniors in the Political Science major with a cumulative grade point average of 3.0 and above and a Political Science major grade point average of 3.3 and above.

Join us in congratulating the following students for their great work: **Ben Blaser, Caleb Rutherford, Tanner Sarauer and Robert Thomasberg!**

## POLITICAL SCIENCE GRADUATES



Join us in congratulating the Fall 2022 Political Science graduates: **Will Bielec, Nicholas**

**Fessler, Joanna Franco Lopez, Allison Hinze, Eric Maier, Hanna Navis, Shawn Poole, and Grant Steffen!**

Let us also congratulate our following Spring 2023 Political Science graduating seniors: **Jayme Baumann, Hector Ortega, Caleb Rutherford, Tanner Sarauer, Alyssa Stribbling and Allison Swanson!**

## TRANSITION OF CHAIR



*Dr. Slagter*

Dr. Tracy Slagter was elected chair of the Political Science Department in March, she'll begin her three year term in June 2023. In Political Science, faculty rotate being chair, and we want to use this space to thank the outgoing chair, Dr. James Krueger, for his service in this role since 2016 as well as welcome Dr. Slagter.

During Dr. Krueger's six years, the department weathered challenges ranging from university-wide budget cuts due to the COVID pandemic. He devoted his energy to adapting department processes including student advising, course scheduling, and other policies that are less visible to students. The department is appreciative of Dr. Krueger's contributions.

Dr. Slagter is entering her seventeenth year as Political Science Faculty member. In addition to her expertise teaching courses in Comparative Politics and International Relations, Dr. Slagter brings a wealth of experience to the role. She has previously served as the Associate Director and Director of the University Studies Program and an interim Chair of the International Studies Program. Dr. Slagter says, "I'm eager to build on a lot of the successes we've had in this department and to enhance the experience for our students even further. My biggest goal, like that of my predecessors, will be to ensure that my colleagues are supported in the work that they do to serve our students. Additionally, I'd like to find more ways to strengthen the connections we have to our students by finding ways to build community both between students themselves and between students and faculty. After our COVID experience, we need strong relationships more than ever."

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## PROVOST SEARCH

This semester UW Oshkosh is selecting a new Provost, the university's chief academic officer. Political Science has three people on the search committee: Administrative Assistant **Angelee Hammond**, major **Ben Blaser**, and **Dr. Tracy Slagter**. Together these three helped select candidates and will be involved in sending assessments of them forward to the Chancellor. Blaser, the recently-elected president of OSA, described his involvement in the search process as "more exciting than I thought it would be," because he was able to take an active role in interviewing candidates. Though students typically don't hear much about the Provost, Ben notes that they "oversee the curriculum," all our academic programs and also our academic support services.



*Ben Blaser, Student*

In short, "the Provost has an incredible impact on how UW Oshkosh prepares its students for a successful post-graduate life." Good thing, then, that we invited four candidates on campus who Ms. Hammond describes as "outstanding." And this is how a University works best—with students, faculty, support personnel, and administration all sharing their ideas and collaborating together to come to agreement on the best outcomes. Thanks to Angelee, Ben and Tracy for their service!

## FREE SPEECH

A recent survey in the University of Wisconsin System shows that students are reluctant to share their political views in class. Students at UWO felt the same in certain situations. Sometimes they feel comfortable; sometimes they do not. The reasons for feeling uncomfortable range from not wanting to share views that may be unpopular among classmates to feeling like they may be disadvantaged in some way by the professor. In Political Science, we are in the business of talking about politics. Diverse opinions are the lifeblood of a healthy democracy.

Dr. Jerry Thomas, who teaches American government & Politics and courses such as constitutional law and environmental law, says that he often shares with students his political leanings (liberal) but is committed to fostering an atmosphere where conservative students feel comfortable sharing and participating. According to Dr. Thomas, this is why he serves as the advisor to the College Republicans. "We don't have to agree on all political issues in order to respect and support one another," Thomas said.

Co-President of the College Democrats, Isabella Wishnie agrees. In an interview on Fox News,

Wishnie said, "How can we say the people are in charge [in a democracy] if we don't value what they have to say? Even if you don't agree with what people say, it might change your perspective."



*Isabella Wishnie, Student*

Wishnie also said, "As a Political Science student striving for a career in public service, I highly value the importance of free speech. I always appreciate hearing my peer's perspectives on various topics. Being in many politics and government classes, it's important to hear viewpoints different from your own."

Students of all political persuasions are welcome in Political Science classes and the department's programs, including majors and minors which include not only Political Science but also Civic Engagement and Law & Policy.

*News interview link: <https://fox11online.com/news/education/students-react-uw-system-survey-showing-reluctance-speak-political-issues-conservative-liberal-college-campus-oshkosh-madison-lawrence-education>*

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## CONNECT WITH ALUMNI

Connect with Political Science alumni! Here is what some recent graduates are currently doing:

- ◆ Brogan Rember, 2019 Senior Procurement Analyst, Collins Aerospace, Mesa, AZ
- ◆ Zachary Collins, 2020 Strategic Sales Development Representative II, 15Five
- ◆ Jonathan Shanks, 2020 Regional Support Center Representative, Spectrum
- ◆ Ariana Blair, 2021 Case Manager, Ethiopian Community Development Council, Inc
- ◆ Zoe Dahse, 2021 Junior Analyst for Nuclear Education, OECD Nuclear Agency, Paris, France
- ◆ Andrew Flood, 2021 Law Clerk, Waukesha County, WI
- ◆ Jacob Fischer, 2022 Staff Assistant, US House of Representatives

You can reach alumni on LinkedIn by joining: <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/12077533/>



## ALUM SPOTLIGHT: CODY DAVIES



Cody Davies, Alum

You walk into your polling place, ready to cast your ballot. Volunteers check the voter rolls, check your photo ID, have you sign your name, and eventually you're given your ballot and a special marker to make your choices behind a curtain. Then you slide your ballot into a machine, a volunteer confirms the ballot was accepted, you get your "I VOTED" sticker, and you leave, civic duty completed.

If that's been your experience, it means that a lot of things have gone right on Election Day. But making elections seem easy is not easy at all—it's the entire job of thousands of municipal clerks and volunteers who rely on the expertise and guidance of the 32 people who work for the [Wisconsin Elections Commission](#) (WEC). One of people at the WEC—Mr. Cody Davies—is a UW Oshkosh Political Science alum who never could have guessed that poll books and voter protection would be things he would know so much about after college graduation.

Cody had plans to become a business major at UW Oshkosh, but introductory courses in Political Science changed his mind. He appreciated the wide range of issues presented in Political Science and the way he was taught to conduct research that was meaningful and important. He still catches himself writing like an academic when, in his work, he has to write for the general public—especially when explaining how voting and elections should work to a population that is constantly fed mis- and disinformation about both.

At the WEC, Cody works as a Polling Place Technology Lead, administering the electronic poll book program called the Badger Book. This system replaces the paper poll books voters sign and contains information on all 3.6 million voters in Wisconsin. Currently, about 10% of municipalities use Badger Book, which covers about 25% of voters. Cody and his team travel around the state to show poll workers and clerks how to use the system and work with them to improve it. "I've been to *a lot of town halls, basements, and churches,*" he notes *with pride.*

When he was in college, Cody did not know that a job like the one he has even existed. And back then, he probably would not have imagined that he would be fascinated and motivated by the kind of work he does now. New college graduates, he said, should keep an open mind as they consider entering the workforce. "Don't overlook state employment," he said, "because jobs at the state level are a good way to find out what you like and, importantly, what you *don't* like to do." He also touted the benefits of doing volunteer work after college. For example, Cody served on the Board of Directors for a Madison-area credit union for over six years, learning about financial institutions and how credit unions serve their communities in a different way than banks do. This experience was important not only for discovering the role of financial institutions in the state, but also for networking in Madison, where he had not lived before moving there after college.

In the end, Cody noted that in any job it is important to find a mission you can enthusiastically support. For Cody, the largely invisible work the WEC does to protect and administer Wisconsin elections is a mission he is very proud to champion. His first jobs out of college were with the Department of Revenue and with an insurance company. While interesting, their missions did not capture his interest as much as his work with the WEC does. The work of the WEC continues to challenge him and force him to think about elections and democracy in new ways.

Cody often thinks of a quote from Teddy Roosevelt: "Far and away the best prize that life has to offer is the chance to work hard at work worth doing." Protecting Wisconsin voters is definitely difficult work that is worth doing, and Cody is proud to do it. "When you show up at the polling place and you don't know anything about the process behind-the-scenes," he said, "then we know everything's working correctly!"

The Political Science Department is proud of the work our alumni across the country and around the world are doing. If you would like to be featured in our newsletter and online, please reach out (or we will find you!) to Tracy Slagter at [slagtert@uwosh.edu](mailto:slagtert@uwosh.edu).

## STUDY ABROAD IN THAILAND

**Dr. David Siemers** and his spouse, **Dr. Sarinda Taengnoi Siemers** of the Economics Department will offer a study abroad program. "We want to take students to Thailand, so they can learn about Thai politics, economics, and culture, but we realized that cost would be a major consideration," said the Political Science Siemers. As such, they applied for a fund left by former International



Studies chair Kenneth Grieb, and obtained a \$15,000 grant. "This is a game changer, in that it puts the cost of a unique, once-in-a-lifetime three-week travel experience within financial reach." Students will visit the vibrant metropolis of Bangkok, smaller cities like Chiang Mai, and take a trip South to the coast. "Thailand is so beautiful and rich culturally--students will benefit just by being there--but to be expertly led by a Thai native (Sarinda) makes this a unique opportunity for our students." The trip will feature early January orientation sessions in Oshkosh, then the trip from January 9th - 28th. Students will earn 6 total credits.



Students who are looking for a unique way to take a Quest 3 class will be able to, but we welcome all students at any stage of their college career. Studying abroad shows you to be an adventurous person willing to do amazing, out-of-the-ordinary things. Feel free to ask Dr. Siemers for details or see [uwosh.edu/oie](http://uwosh.edu/oie).

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## FALL 2023 LIST OF COURSES



Contact Angelee Hammond at [hammond@uwosh.edu](mailto:hammond@uwosh.edu) or (920) 424-3456 with questions on registering into Political Science courses:

### Core courses being offered:

101 Comparative Politics  
105 American Government  
111Q1 Politics & Culture  
112Q1 Power, Justice & the State  
115 International Politics  
401 Political Analysis

### Fall 2023 Additional Courses

*American Government*  
321 American Public Policy

*Political Theory*  
349 Foundations of Political Theory

*Comparative Government*  
303 Women, Politics & Policy  
342 Gender, Law & Policy  
386 Politics of Developing Countries

*International Relations*  
301 European Union Politics  
322 International Political Economy