Angie Bautista-Chavez

_The Domestic and International Politics of U.S. Immigration Policy_
(Dan Carpenter, Jennifer Hochschild, Anne Sartori, and Beth Simmons)

“Immigration policy may seem like a world where every state goes it alone, but in fact nations cooperate continuously in ways obvious and nuanced, and that cooperation happens primarily through their administrative agencies. Angie Bautista-Chavez has provided powerful new theory and in-depth empirical demonstration of this cooperation. Her thesis illuminates long-standing puzzles in the social sciences and addresses issues central to our times. Congratulations, Dr. Bautista-Chavez!”

-- Dan Carpenter
Chris Chaky

Public Opinion in the Opioid Crisis: Essays on Salience, Policy, and Attribution

(Jennifer Hochschild, Ryan Enos, and Jon Rogowski)

“Thanks for such important research on a crucial problem – how the American public understands and responds to the opioid crisis. Chris asks, and answers questions about how direct or local experiences with opioids shapes people’s perceptions of how important the crisis is and how much public officials should act on it, how opioids are “like” marijuana, and how blaming doctors does— but blaming pharmaceutical companies does not—shape citizens’ policy views. Chris’s research will help policy makers solve the problem of opioid overdoses – a major contribution.”

-- Jennifer Hochschild
Colleen Driscoll

*Talk Matters: Three Essays on the Strategic Use of Public Speech in Parliamentary Politics*

(Daniel Ziblatt, Peter Hall, and Daniel Smith)

“In "Talk Matters," Colleen takes on the conventional wisdom that politicians' talk on the floor of parliaments is primarily about presenting policy positions. In an in-depth analysis of millions of speeches in the Irish and German parliaments over several decades, Colleen teaches us about the strategic uses of political speech--who gets to speak, when and what gets talked about--demonstrating this all reflect efforts by party leaders to navigate career goals, uncertainty about what their voters actually think, and the career ambitions of politicians. Congrats Colleen!”

-- Daniel Ziblatt
“Huge congratulations to Tweedy Flanigan, whose dissertation rigorously examines the morality of resistance. Flanigan defends a protest-based theory of resisting oppression. He identifies a position in between the two off-the-shelf views: an absolutist view of non-violence, and an unchecked right to turn to violence, even when it will be futile. In three beautifully written essays, he draws upon the work of Martin Luther King Jr. and his anti-pacifist opponents, developing a genuinely new — and arresting — political theory of resistance. His argument is as analytically impressive as it is morally urgent for our time.”

-- Eric Beerbohm
“Observing the United States in recent years has made us acutely aware that politicians are not always on their best behavior. Yet, political science research on whether and how politicians survive scandal is very underdeveloped. Mark brought theoretical clarity, analytical rigor, and creativity to a question of central importance to the systems of accountability that make representative democracy work. Congratulations Dr. Hill!”

-- Ryan Enos
"In "Taking Flight: Overcoming Challenges to Airport Development," Anna Hopper asks under what conditions can the enormous barriers be overcome to building airports—public goods that have highly focused costs on local communities? She finds surprisingly that civil society resistance to building of airports is not the main challenge but instead most critical is politicians' ability to manage the issue space of national politics, linking airport development to the economy as a whole. Based on cross national data and deep dive on Heathrow Airport, Anna comes to many new fresh insights on an understudied topic with broad implications."

-- Daniel Ziblatt
"Most political scientists ask why policies pass or not — but what happens then? When policies fail to achieve clearly stated goals, do they ever get repealed or revised? With a deft research design and detailed histories, Sarah James compares U.S. states that enacted ineffective school truancy and business subsidy measures. Partisan leanings do not explain which states are change, she shows. Instead, public data collection capacities plus either public or private capacities to analyze that information are distinct, key preconditions for remedial action when policies fail. Sarah tackles these important issues by tracking school truancy and business subsidy measures enacted by U.S. states. With deft comparisons, she shows that public policy makers are more likely to recognize policy failures if appropriate data tracing occurs, but data alone are not enough. Either public agencies or private groups have to analyze the information to lay the basis for repeal or revision of failed laws.

—Theda Skocpol
Connor Jerzak

Political Methodology Tools for Data Linkage, Effect Estimation, and Statistical Inference

(Gary King, Kosuke Imai, and Xiang Zhou)

“Connor’s dissertation makes important contributions to the methodological infrastructure necessary for learning about the essence of politics and political behavior, which is found at the connections among different people in all of the multidimensional aspects of their lives. Amazingly, he invented a way to discover political and other interactions among people (or groups) even when these interactions are not measured, and he showed the power of this new method to uncover previously unknown information by replicating and improving on 11 prior scholarly works. Along the way, he also invented ways of merging information about people or groups even when they are referred to by different names in separate datasets. Big congratulations and many thanks for all you’ve contributed to our research community.”

-- Gary King
Gabe Koehler-Derrick

The Colonial Origins of Local Inequality
(Melani Cammett, Matt Blackwell, Daniel Ziblatt, and James Robinson)

“Gabe, a huge congratulations on completing your PhD! Your work addresses vital issues about the roots of chronic state weakness in developing countries and serves as a valuable corrective to dominant approaches to this question in the Middle East and North Africa. It is hard to overstate the importance of your research. Through rigorous empirical analyses of original historical data, you show how colonial practices and institutions created or reinforced regional inequalities that have endured well into the post-independence period. Since I arrived at Harvard, it has been a real privilege to work with you. Your commitment to serious intellectual engagement, professionalism, and ethical research practices are a model for all. I am very excited to watch your career unfold and look forward to our continued collaborations!”

-- Melani Cammett
Dear Shiro, congratulations on everything you have accomplished. It’s hard to say it all here. You arrived your first year and set right to work on the Cooperative Congressional Election Study. Through that work, you have made a huge impact on the discipline, developing new data, methods, and software for the analysis of surveys. From there you set out to understand the nationalization of elections. Your thesis shows us that the national division into Ds and Rs is brittle and fragile. Even in places that we call solidly Democratic or solidly Republican, the other party often wins in local elections. You have been an incredible collaborator, colleague, and teacher. Thank you for everything you have done. Good luck at Yale.”

-- Stephen Ansolabehere
Audrey Latura

States, Employers, and Gender Equality
(Torben Iversen, Melani Cammett, and Horacio Larreguy)

“Audrey’s dissertation shows that women’s professional advancement in liberal welfare states, such as Canada and the US, is closely tied to the provision of high-quality, employer-sponsored childcare. Yet such provision is rare. Integrating quantitative analysis with a survey experiment, Audrey demonstrates that the reason is not lack of demand, but instead a failure of supply. Only a well-designed combination of regulation and subsidies can overcome this market failure. Congratulations, Dr. Latura, on a pioneering study with major policy implications!”

-- Torben Iversen
Brendan McElroy

Peasants and Parliaments: Agrarian Reform in Eighteenth Century Europe

(Tim Colton, Peter Hall, Torben Iversen, and Daniel Ziblatt)

“Brendan, we salute you for reawakening the debate about the role of the state in economic development. Your thesis offers a fundamental revision of core contentions by North, Weingast, Stasavage, and others, directing the field’s attention toward half-forgotten traditional elites who turn out to have a bigger part in the drama than has widely been thought. You did this through deep archival research in records and handwritten documents – so deep we wondered once or twice if you were going to surface! But you did, and produced a beautifully crafted and highly illuminating account which is sure to make an impact.”

-- Tim Colton
Michael Morse

Felon Disenfranchisement and Legal Financial Obligation
(Steve Ansolabehere, Nicholas Stephanopoulos (HLS), and Marc Meredith (UPenn))

“Morse’s dissertation took a deep dive into the politics surrounding the development, passage, and implementation of Amendment 4, which expanded the ability for people with a felony conviction to vote in Florida. What is so impressive about this dissertation is the amount of novel data that Morse identified, collected, and processed. These data allowed him to reach some really unique and important conclusions that affect how we think about potential strategies for achieving reform. Morse demonstrates that people who want reform need to walk a tightrope. On one hand, African-Americans were the policy entrepreneurs responsible for getting Amendment 4 on the agenda. But then in order to get more than 60 percent of Florida voters to support the reforms, the campaign then downplayed race and played up a more conservative rhetoric about the importance of recognizing when a debt has been paid. While Morse’s evidence suggests that this aided in winning over the votes of Republicans, he also shows that this likely caused the payment of legal financial obligations to be tied to what is understood to be the completion of a criminal sentence in Florida. Unfortunately, Morse’s evidence shows that this means a majority of the people who could have had their voting rights restored by Amendment 4 will still be disenfranchised. Overall, Morse’s dissertation provides a model of what someone with a lot of creativity, knowledge of election law, and data analysis skills can accomplish in graduate school.”

--Marc Meredith
Lowry Pressly

Being Accountable: Privacy, Self, and Society
(Michael Sandel, Danielle Allen, Eric Beerbohm, and Nancy Rosenblum)

“For all the debate about threats to privacy posed by social media companies, governmental surveillance, and big data, it is surprisingly difficult to explain why privacy matters. Until now. In a dazzling dissertation, soon-to-be book, Lowry Pressly explains why we should care about privacy, and gives us a richly nuanced account of personhood and freedom. Congratulations, Lowry!”

-- Michael Sandel
Albert Rivero

*Essays on the Federal Judicial Hierarchy*
(Steve Ansolabehere, Jon Rogowski, and Jim Snyder)

“Congratulations Albert! You are opening up a whole new area of inquiry. Your thesis takes us into the world of the lower federal courts. You have shown us how richly varied the federal courts are and how the cultures of one circuit differ from another. You have brought federalism back into our understanding of the judiciary. At every step of the way in your studies it has been a true pleasure to work with you and learn from you. Good luck at UVA!”

-- Steve Ansolabehere
Andrew Stone

*Patterns and Consequences of Elite Politicization of the American Judiciary*

(Steve Ansolabehere, Jon Rogowski, and Jim Snyder)

“Congratulations Andy! You have taken on one of the most important questions about the American system of government. How independent is the independent judiciary? You have shown us how public reception of the Supreme Court and the politicization of Court appointments is shaping the Court. It has been wonderful to work with you. And you have contributed greatly to the department. Good luck at Wash U.”

-- Steve Ansolabehere
Elections are said to be a critical source of government accountability. The pursuit of re-election induces politicians to listen to voters and avoid egregious abuse. But such an “electoral connection” cannot be taken for granted. Where party and state institutions are weak, voters may grow so distrustful that they throw incumbents out even when they perform well. The result is a vicious circle in which elected politicians, knowing they will be voted out, have no incentive to govern well, which reinforces public distrust. Julie Weaver’s brilliant analysis of local electoral dynamics in Peru gets at the core of the crisis of representation that plagues many new democracies. She shows that unconditional anti-incumbent voting in Peru is not driven by low voter information, as is often believed, but rather in a lack of trust in the state institutions designed to constrain elected officials.”

-- Steve Levitsky
Case Studies in Public Interest Technology
(Latanya Sweeney, James Waldo (SEAS/HKS), and Nicol Turner-Lee (Brookings))

“Jin’s thesis is the first doctoral thesis in the country in the emerging discipline, Public Interest Technology—a pursuit underway at 50 universities worldwide. Jin contributes a model of how the infusion of the public’s interest helps improve society. His thesis details scientific experiments that show racial bias on Facebook and identify theft problems with Social Security numbers, and introduces an innovative COVID-19 contact tracing technology. All three lead to improvements in societal laws, norms and the marketplace.”

-- Latanya Sweeney
Michael Zoorob

Who Guards the Guardians? Political Accountability over the Police in the United States

(Jennifer Hochschild, Jon Rogowski, and Theda Skocpol)

“Police solve serious social and personal problems, are authorized to use force to combat crime and violence – and sometimes kill civilians, especially young poor Black men. How can we understand and manage policing? Michael is one of the rare scholars who genuinely wants to answer this question in the interests of social betterment, not use it as a Trojan horse to promote a preferred political or policy view. His research ranges across public opinion, electoral politics, unions, police brutality and more- and all of it will help us understand and manage this crucial, fraught issue of state control.”

-- Jennifer Hochschild