

POLITY

Political Science at Stetson University



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Greetings from Elizabeth Hall

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Professor, Chair

Sidra Hamidi
Assistant Professor

Boris Litvin
Visiting Assistant
Professor

Elizabeth Plantan
Assistant Professor

Kelly B. Smith
Assistant Professor

Steven Smallpage
Assistant Professor

David Hill
Professor,
Associate Dean of
the College of Arts
and Sciences

**T. Wayne
Bailey**
Professor Emeritus

Anne Hallum
Professor Emerita

Eugene Huskey
Professor Emeritus

Gary Maris
Professor Emeritus

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Administrative
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REMEMBERING DR. BAILEY*

The late Dr. T. Wayne Bailey, professor, and beloved colleague, was described as “a champion for generations of Stetson students” at his retirement in 2016. Not only was Dr. Bailey the longest-serving faculty member in the history of Stetson University at 53 years, but his influence reached throughout Florida and into our nation’s capital. Even in his final months, he was sought for commentary and continued to engage in the political discourse he treasured.

Tuesday, August 10, 4:30 p.m.

In recognition of the incredible impact of his many years of service to Stetson and the lives he has touched, Stetson University is holding a virtual memorial in his honor. This will allow as many of his friends, associates, students, and colleagues as possible to attend.

Join us as we remember Dr. Bailey through the voices of those who knew him and learned from him. The service will be a celebration of the passion he had, and inspired in others, for public service, political leadership, and responsible government.



Register

The virtual ceremony will require you to register for the event at: <https://stetson-edu.zoom.us/j/91890417885>. For questions, please contact events@stetson.edu.

**Copy from Stetson Communications*

Department News

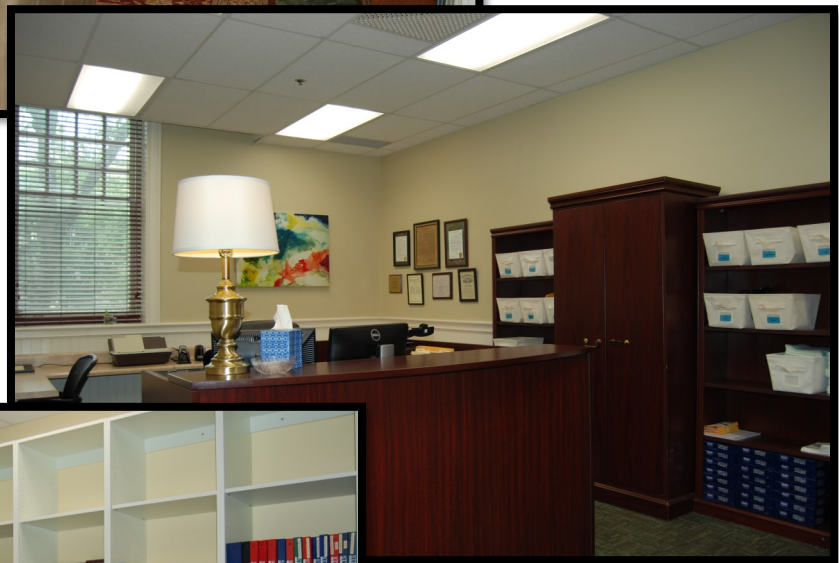
If we have learned anything from 2020 it is that change will always come. In fact, over the last several years change has characterized the Stetson Department of Political Science. From faculty retirements and the hiring of new colleagues, the dramatic growth in the number of political science majors, changes to the curriculum, and the relocation of the department offices to the first floor of Elizabeth Hall, the department has changed from what it was a few short years ago. However, we will always remain connected to our rich history, even as we move forward into the future. We want to take a moment to catch you up on things going on in the department. The first piece of news is that on August 15, Dr. Bill Nylen will return to the role of Department Chair to replace Dr. David Hill who recently became Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. After our decades long stay on the third floor of Elizabeth Hall, in the fall of 2018, we and our colleagues in the Department of Economics moved to a larger space on the first floor of Elizabeth Hall (see below).

New Spaces



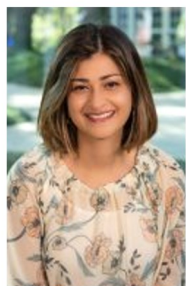
**Elizabeth Hall
Room 112**

**Elizabeth Hall
Room 111**



**Elizabeth Hall
Room 112
Conference Room**

New Faculty

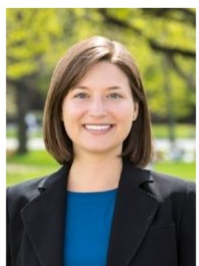


Sidra Hamidi is an Assistant Professor who joined us in 2019. She earned her Ph.D. in Political Science from Northwestern University and was a Stanton Nuclear Security Postdoctoral Fellow at the Center for International Security and Cooperation at Stanford University. Her research interests are in international security, nuclear politics, national identity, and discourse. Her current book project explores the politics of the distinction between nuclear and non-nuclear states, particularly as it applies to the nuclear status of Israel, India, and Iran. She is also working on two articles: one that explores the role of international law in the Non-Proliferation Treaty and another on the politics of highly technical processes involved in the production of nuclear materials. She has published in outlets such as the *Washington Post* and *War on the Rocks*.



Boris Litvin, a current Visiting Assistant Professor, received his Ph.D. in Political Science from Northwestern University in 2019. His research extends across modern political thought, focusing especially on the relationship between rhetoric and democratic theory. Specifically, Boris's work investigates how modern political thinkers thematize spectators and spectatorship in their conceptions of "the people," in turn connecting these discussions to authors' efforts to engage their own audiences in new ways. Boris's book manuscript, *You the People: Political Theory and the Construction of Popular Audiences*, locates these engagements in the theoretic and literary works of Niccolò Machiavelli, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Hannah Arendt.

Boris's scholarly publications have appeared in the *European Journal of Political Theory* and the *Review of Politics*, and his commentary connecting political theory to contemporary political events has appeared in the *New Statesman*. Boris mainly teaches courses in political theory and political philosophy.



Dr. Elizabeth Plantan is an Assistant Professor who joined us in 2020. Prior to joining the faculty at Stetson, she was a China Public Policy Postdoctoral Fellow at the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard Kennedy School from 2018-2020. Her current book project examines environmental activism in China and Russia. Dr. Plantan received her Ph.D. in Government from Cornell University. In addition, she holds an M.A. in Russian & East European Studies from Indiana University Bloomington and a B.A. in Government and Russian & East European Studies from Wesleyan University in Middletown, CT.



Dr. Kelly B. Smith is an Assistant Professor of Political Science who joined the department in 2018. Dr. Smith received her B.A. from Providence College and her A.M. and Ph.D. in Political Science from Brown University. Her research focuses on American politics with a particular emphasis on the relationship among state legislative politics, bureaucratic politics, and democratic governance. Prior to joining Stetson, Dr. Smith worked as a postdoctoral research associate on the education standards research team at the Taubman Center for American Politics and Policy at Brown University.



Dr. Steven Smallpage is an Assistant Professor who joined the department in 2016. He received his Ph.D. in Political Science from Michigan State University. He received an M.A. in Political Theory and Jewish Studies at the University of Toronto and a B.A. in Political Science at American University in Washington, DC. His main research areas are empirical political psychology, American political culture and development, and the history of normative political philosophy. One of the leading scholars of conspiratorial thinking, he has published articles in *British Journal of Political Science*, *Political Communication*, *Research and Politics*, and books chapters for an edited volume published by Oxford University Press.

Sabbatical vs. Pandemic: Prof. Nylen's 2020-2021 Journey into Bolsonaro's Brazil



Who could not have predicted that 2020/2021 would be a terrible year to take a sabbatical leave from Stetson in order to carry out in-the-field interview-based research in Brazil?

I was given an inkling of what was to come as Stetson's in-person classes became virtual in the spring of 2020. So I changed my research project accordingly, from one that would have sent me into parts of Brazil where I had no previous contacts, to one that built upon previous research from twenty-eight years ago at a single site where I was known and, hopefully, welcome.

Alas, even Plan B turned out to be impossible as *all* of Brazil was plunged into a prolonged pandemic crisis from which it had not emerged even

in my final days in the country in the mid-summer of 2021.

As I write this note from the university town of Viçosa in the hills of Minas Gerais state, a half hour drive from the small rural town where my wife grew up and where her parents and much of her family still live, I look back upon my year of dashed research plans, but also upon a deep understanding of a new chapter of Brazilian and Latin American political history that has been co-written by the Covid-19 pandemic.

It's no secret that democracies across the globe are increasingly beset by the challenges of right-wing populist politicians and movements. The pandemic has only accelerated and intensified these challenges. Economies and societies long suffering the effects of income and wealth inequality, brought on over the last several decades by aggressive global economic integration and cutthroat race-to-the-bottom competition, found themselves slammed by the pandemic which disproportionately hit poor and struggling majorities with sickness, death, and spiraling levels of unemployment. Populists everywhere have always met such challenges with a mixture of anti-'elite' scapegoating, nationalist posturing, and promises of a return to some glorified golden age of the past – even if that return requires some 'necessary' violence and bending, if not breaking, of the democratic rules to get there.

Here in Brazil, the man to fit this right-wing populist bill was a retired army captain and long-serving obscure congressman from Rio de Janeiro, Jair Messias Bolsonaro. Elected in 2018 in a polarized political environment that had largely discredited many of Brazil's more traditional parties and politicians, Bolsonaro appealed to many Brazilians as an outsider candidate who would shake up the status quo and impose discipline on the fractious political debate and policy gridlock. He was quickly labeled 'Tropical Trump' for his coarse language and his penchant for speaking candidly – with clear homophobic, racist, anti-communist, and messianic Evangelical Christian overtones – in large public gatherings of adoring fans. He attacked intellectuals, and cut education budgets. He attacked environmentalists, and cut environmental protection budgets and enforcement. He praised the military and the police, and raised their budgets accordingly.

And then the pandemic hit.

And like Trump, Bolsonaro spent the first months of the crisis denying its existence and then its severity. He touted false cures (hydroxychloroquine) and railed against wearing masks. When his Health Ministers blanched, he fired them, finally settling on a retired general with no health-related experience (who has since resigned in disgrace). He fell for the herd immunity idea, refusing to front-order vaccines, then reversed course when several state governors attempted to set up their own vaccination programs. By then, the country was at the proverbial end of the line for vaccines. Meanwhile, the sickness and death numbers piled up: Brazil is second only to the United States in the official number of Covid deaths (525,000 as of this writing), and seventh in the world

Faculty Spotlight contd.

in deaths per capita (Peru is first on that unhappy list). This last week, it was revealed that Health Ministry officials attempted to skim off millions of dollars in a backchannel deal with an Indian vaccine maker; when Bolsonaro was informed of the problem, he apparently did nothing, sparking a Congressional probe into the matter and efforts to initiate an impeachment process from the fragmented opposition.

But here in Brazil, and in much of the rest of Latin America, the more interesting story is less about the details of this or that strong man or strong man wannabe. The truly compelling, and disturbing, story is about how and why so many Latin American citizens are turning away from the promise of democracy.



The politics of the Big Man (dictatorships) and the Big Military (military-authoritarianism) had dogged Latin America since before independence in the early-to-mid 19th century. As an undergraduate in the 1970s, only three of the region's twenty independent countries were democracies; by the time I came to Stetson in 1992, only Cuba remained stubbornly non-democratic. This 'wave of democratization' was remarkable, as were its counterparts in the former Soviet Union and in much of Africa.

Indeed, I based my career on studying and teaching about democratization.

But in recent years, democracies everywhere have been struggling to find their way in a global economic context of financial instability and ever-increasing inequality, in which dreams of upward mobility and a middle-class lifestyle are increasingly out of reach for large and, in many cases, growing numbers. With poverty and dashed hopes comes increased criminality 'from below' and corruption 'from above.' And that presents an opportunity for populist politicians – who are always lurking in the shadows – to stoke the flames of fear and vengeance against any number of convenient scapegoats and, inevitably, against the checks and balances and electoral mechanisms of democracy itself.

My best friend, here in Viçosa, and several of my wife's brothers and sisters, are avowed *Bolsonaristas*. It has made for some tense moments. They don't see his personal failings (an unimpressive past, constant lies, corruption and nepotism, an inability to admit mistakes of any kind). They do see, however, that Brazilian democracy is failing to deliver on its promises. They see the criminality and the corruption that has pervaded daily life (amplified, of course, by mainstream and online media). And they see this larger-than-life Big Man spouting the same righteous indignation that they have felt on a daily basis. They identify with his outsider image. They identify with his rejection of the status quo. They believe he can right all wrongs. They will be sorely disappointed. Again.

Coming home, my personal challenge will be to somehow turn all of this disappointment – including my own – into teachable moments for my students. What *is* the 'promise of democracy?' Why is it, apparently, so easily undermined? Why do so many disappointed people grasp for the populist promises made by such obviously flawed 'Big Men?' And, finally, how can we humans – Brazilians and United States of Americans included – construct and then reconnect with a more resilient version of democracy, one with a more resilient and equitable promise?



2021 Outstanding Seniors



Arye Scott Beck was a double major in political science and international studies. Arye is a member of Phi Beta Kappa Honor Society and Chi Alpha Sigma (National Athlete Honor Society). In addition to his outstanding academic performance, he was a member of Stetson's cross country team and active on campus. He was a member of the Student Government Association and served as co-president of the Stetson Student-Athlete Advisory Committee and chair of the ASUN Student-Athlete Advisory Committee.

Arye's senior research project focused on why certain Latin American states refuse U.S. developmental and humanitarian aid. The project examined Andean countries and their interactions with the United States to determine if there are certain characteristics among some states that define the reasons they would reject aid. Arye's project reflects his desire, as one faculty mentor stated, "to studying and understanding the issues and problems of the world today, while also feeling those issues and problems as his own."

Arye will be attending Georgetown Law School this fall.



Kennedy Ryder was a double major in history and political science, with a minor in American studies. In addition, she was a member of the Student Government Association, Phi Alpha Theta (History Honor Society) and Pi Sigma Alpha (Political Science Honor Society).

Kennedy's senior thesis, "The Early Federal Republic's Forgotten Crisis: How Konrad Adenauer Stabilized West Germany Through Solving the Refugee Question (1945-1953)," focused on Konrad Adenauer's efforts to solve the refugee question in West Germany and how that ultimately contributed to Adenauer's ability to solve West Germany's post-World War II challenges. Her extensive primary sources included U.S. Congressional reports, firsthand accounts from surviving refugees, public opinion data, newspaper articles and electoral results. Kennedy is taking a gap year after graduation to learn a foreign language and take the GRE in preparation for graduate studies in history.



Danielle Lund was a transfer student, who despite having her brief time at Stetson disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, excelled in the classroom. This is not surprising, as one of her faculty mentors described her as "inquisitive and dedicated."

Danielle was a member of the Tri Delta sorority and a student ambassador. Focusing on campaigns and legislative outcomes in the Florida Legislature, Danielle's senior research project, "Money in Politics - How do Campaign Limitations Impact Legislative Outcomes?" focused on the role of campaign finance on legislative outcomes that affect middle and lower income citizens.

Following graduation, Danielle will take a gap year and then pursue graduate education in political science with a focus on international relations.

2021 Outstanding Seniors



Sydney Betancourt's record at Stetson consisted of academic excellence plus a deep sense of community engagement and professionalism. In the study of Russian politics, Sydney took a creative approach to her final paper, writing on the role of satire as political protest in Russia. In international law, Sydney again took a distinct approach and wrote on the development of international sports law with a focus on the Russian doping scandal at the Olympics.

Sydney's senior research project focused on the onset of civil war and used two African states as qualitative case studies. The research project was thoughtfully and carefully designed, and she presented it with confidence, taking questions with ease from her peers and a panel of professors at the end of the semester, said one professor.

Her sense of creativity and drive is reflected in her contributions outside of the classroom, as well. Sydney worked with the WORLD Center for International Learning at Stetson and organized events such as an October 2020 event on elections around the world. In addition, Sydney is a member of Omicron Delta Kappa and Sigma Alpha Iota.

Her future plans again are indicative of her curiosity: She hopes to serve in the Peace Corps along with pursuing a Master of Arts in conflict studies.



Sarah Nouri's academic accomplishments at Stetson are impressive. Her 4.0 GPA speaks for itself. Yet, beyond that accomplishment, Sarah, both a diligent and curious student, pushed herself to go above and beyond basic requirements and challenge her own understandings. Further, Sarah is a part of the Phi Eta Sigma Honor Society and worked as a Spanish and Arabic tutor.

Sarah's analytical and writing skills, in particular, demonstrate an ability to investigate existing scholarship and provide a meaningful contribution, according to professors. In international relations, Sarah wrote a short paper critiquing Francis Fukuyama's "end of history" thesis that rivals most academic understandings on the topic. Sarah's senior research project thesis examined the multiple factors that influenced the United States to conduct covert interventions in Latin America throughout the Cold War. Contrary to existing perspectives that focus on the broad security rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union and the economic interests of U.S. businesses, Sarah argues that these interventions were a consequence of ideational factors, such as American exceptionalism, national memory and racial difference.

Sarah will attend Northeastern University in the fall to pursue a Master of Science in global studies and international relations with a concentration in diplomacy.

For more information on outstanding seniors in the College of Arts and Sciences, please visit their website at: <https://www.stetson.edu/other/senior-awards/arts-sciences.php>

William Amory Underhill Award 2021



George Alderman

Our 2021 William Amory Underhill award winner is political science major George Alderman. Born and raised in Hollywood, Florida, George chose to attend Stetson due to its reputable political science department and close-knit community of leaders and activists. During his tenure at Stetson, he sought to be a steward for his community and served as Student Government Association President from April 2019 to October 2020. Through his efforts, George enabled the personal growth of other students by taking a leadership role in Model Senate and as a mentor for his brothers in Lambda Chi Alpha. Beyond Stetson, George immersed himself in the political world. Since 2019, George has been one of the leaders for the American Conservation Coalition's Save the Sunshine State campaign and currently serves as the Florida Legislative Director. He was recently selected by Influence Magazine as one of the Rising Stars of Florida Politics. George is currently interning at the Washington DC Office of United States House of Representatives member Michael Waltz of the Sixth Congressional District of Florida. This fall George will enroll at Johns Hopkins University to pursue a Master of Arts in Government with a concentration in political communication.

2021 Graduate Highlight



**Nelson
Quezada-Herrera**

In May of 2021, Political Science major Nelson Quezada Herrera (a double major in English) became the first in his family to graduate college. While at Stetson Nelson was highly involved in community engagement. As a member of the Bonner program, he volunteered with the local high school as a tutor and with the Community Education Project, Stetson's higher education in prison program, as an intern in capacity building and community outreach. Nelson was the recipient of the Stetson Undergraduate Research Experience (SURE) grant for two consecutive years. Through these grants, Nelson engaged in original research by analyzing public opinion on a salient political issue. He would go on to expand on his findings with his senior research project. Nelson was awarded a number of accolades by the American Political Science Association (APSA) including presenting his senior research at the annual APSA meeting in 2020, selection to the competitive Ralph Bunche Summer Institute, and recipient of a Diversity Fellowship for graduate school. Nelson will pursue a Ph.D. in political science at Emory University in the fall.



Robbie Jones ('14)

After graduating from Stetson in 2014 with a B.A. in political science, Robbie took a gap year before starting at William & Mary Law School in 2015. During law school, he served as a member of the William & Mary Law Review and the moot court team. In 2018, Robbie graduated summa cum laude and tied for first in his class from William & Mary Law School. Based on his class ranking, Robbie was selected for membership in the Order of the Coif. Following law school, Robbie completed two federal clerkships. He first clerked for Judge John Antoon II on the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Florida and then for Judge Robert B. King on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit. Upon completing his second clerkship, Robbie joined the New York office of the internationally renowned law firm Sullivan & Cromwell. At the Firm, Robbie focuses his practice on complex civil litigation in federal trial and appellate courts throughout the country. He also actively participates in the Firm's robust pro bono practice.

*As every Stetson political science student knows, the Political Science Department is truly a family. All of the professors are, of course, gifted teachers and scholars. Indeed, the writing and analytical skills that I learned at Stetson benefit me to this day. But beyond academics, the professors are also mentors and friends who inspire and guide their students. I cherished my time in the Department and I am deeply grateful for all the people I met there, some of whom continue to guide me today....*Robbie Jones ('14)

Immediately following graduation in 2019, Nicolette attended the prestigious Stanford Summer Institute in Political Psychology, a program designed for advanced graduate students. That following year, with Dr. Smallpage, Nicolette presented the findings of her senior research project on conspiracy thinking and American politics at the Southern Political Science Association meetings. Shortly after, she was accepted into the political science doctoral program at Northwestern University.

This fall semester, Nicolette will be starting the third year in the program. The past two years have been dedicated to learning the ins and outs of American politics from institutions to behavior while conducting her own research on celebrity influence on political conspiracy belief.

My accomplishments thus far would not have been possible without the support of the Stetson political science department that has always supported my questions and interests in the discipline. I am especially grateful for Dr. Steven Smallpage who has always believed in me and continues to support me throughout my graduate career. Nicolette Alayon ('19)



Nicolette Alayon ('19)

Additional Resources

In order to make Polity more interactive, we invite you to bring us up to date on:

- ~where life has taken you since Stetson;
 - ~what you remember most about your Political Science classes;
 - ~and what you wished you'd learned from your Stetson education but didn't.
- Send your responses to: dhill@stetson.edu.

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