

Tristan M. Hightower

Curriculum Vitae

University of Maryland
Department of Government and Politics
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Education

Ph.D. Political Science, University of Maryland, expected 2024.

Dissertation Title: *The Life Cycle of Issue Spaces*

My dissertation focuses on the importance of context, or issue space, for the formation, longevity, and political activities of interest groups. I present a theoretical framework arguing that groups do not exist in isolation but are part of a larger issue space where they interact with and are affected by other groups. These dynamics are critical to understanding the life cycle of groups relative to their engagement in the policy process. I illustrate these dynamics across three in-depth empirical analyses that test the theory across common, complex, and polarized issues.

Primary Field: American Politics; Secondary Field: Political Methodology and Formal Theory.

Committee: Kris Miler (Chair), Jim Gimpel, Patrick Wohlfarth, David Karol, and Frances Lee (*Princeton*).

M.A. Government and Politics, University of Maryland, Dec. 2020.

B.A. Political Science (with honors), University of Tennessee, Dec. 2017.

Summa Cum Laude, Chancellor's Honors Program, Phi Beta Kappa (ΦBK).

Thesis Advisor: Tony Nownes, Professor of Political Science.

Research Interests

American Politics (Interest Groups and Representation, Congress, Polarization).

Quantitative Methodology (Organizational Ecology, Text Analysis, Survey Design).

Publications

Hightower, Tristan M. *Forthcoming*. "The Population Ecology of Interest Groups and Counter-Mobilization: Reproductive Rights Organizations in the United States, 1920-1985." *Political Science Research and Methods*.

Hightower, Tristan M. 2021. "Packed Pews: Understanding Evangelical Group Formation." *Interest Groups & Advocacy* 10(2): 221-39.

Roger H. Davidson Award Winner, 2022.

Don C. Piper Award Winner, 2022.

Gimpel, James G., **Tristan M. Hightower**, and Patrick C. Wohlfarth. 2021. "The Geography of Law: Understanding the Origin of State and Federal Redistricting Cases." *Political Research Quarterly* 74(4): 779-794.

Hightower, Tristan M. 2019. "Tennessee's Promise: Education for All?" *Pursuit - The Journal of Undergraduate Research at the University of Tennessee* 9(1): Article 4.

Working Papers

"Legislative Vulnerability and Bipartisanship: Save Yourself or Save the Party?" (with Kris Miler, first author).

"Modeling Megachurches as Interest Groups: Evidence from Tennessee."

For works early in development, please visit my website's research page: tristanhightower.com/research.

Teaching, Administrative, and Research Experience

Instructor of Record

GVPT379C: Popular Culture and American Politics, Summer 2023.

GVPT379I: Interest Group and External Influence in the 2020 Presidential Election, Summer 2021, Winter 2023.

GVPT170: Intro to American Government, Winter 2022.

Teaching Assistant

GVPT201H: Honors: Scope and Methods for Political Science Research (Sarah Croco, Primary Instructor), Spring 2024.

HGLO208: Using Data to Answer Hard Questions (Sarah Croco, Primary Instructor), Fall 2023.

GVPT432: Civil Rights (Mike Spivey, Primary Instructor), Spring 2023 (Half-Time Grader).

GVPT439B: The First Amendment (Mike Spivey, Primary Instructor), Fall 2022 (Half-Time Grader).

GVPT359I: Constructing a Gender Inclusive Society (Jóhanna Birnir, Primary Instructor), Summer 2021.

GVPT202: Politics, Constitutional Policy, and the Institution of the U.S. Supreme Court (Patrick Wohlfarth, Primary Instructor), Spring 2019.

GVPT473: The U.S. Congress (Ric Uslander, Primary Instructor), Fall 2018.

Administrative

Assistant Director and Graduate Assistant, GVPT Global Learning Programs (Jóhanna Birnir, Director), University of Maryland, Fall 2019-Spring 2022.

Research Assistant

Frances Lee, Princeton University, May - Aug. 2023.

Kris Miler, University of Maryland, March-May 2020, March-May 2021, August-December 2022, April-June 2023.

Center for Democracy and Civic Engagement (supervisor, Mike Hanmer), University of Maryland, Jan.-May 2023.

James Gimpel, University of Maryland, Summer 2019, February 2020.

Hemant Sharma, University of Tennessee, Summer 2015.

Grants, Honors, and Other Awards

Travel Grant, American Political Science Association, August 2023 (\$150).

Jacob K. Goldhaber Travel Grant, College of Behavioral and Social Sciences, University of Maryland, August 2023 (\$400).

Graduate Research Travel Grant, Department of Government and Politics, University of Maryland, August 2023 (\$400).

Award for Exceptional Campus Service 2019-2023, The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi Chapter 22CP, April 2023.

Prestage-Cook Travel Grant, Southern Political Science Association, January 2023 (\$300).

Love of Learning Research Grant, The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi, September 2022 (\$1000).

Harrell Rodgers Travel Grant, Midwest Political Science Association, April 2022 (\$500).

Don C. Piper Award for the best conference paper or journal article authored by a graduate student, Department of Government and Politics, University of Maryland, 2022.

Roger H. Davidson Award for best graduate student research paper in the field of American politics, Department of Government and Politics, University of Maryland, 2022.

American Politics Graduate Student Research Grant, Department of Government and Politics, University of Maryland (awarded for institutional licensure of Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) software), December 2021.

Jacob K. Goldhaber Travel Grant, College of Behavioral and Social Sciences, University of Maryland, November 2021 (\$400).

Graduate Research Travel Grant, Department of Government and Politics, University of Maryland, October 2021 (\$400).

Virginia Gray Graduate Research Award, APSA Political Organizations and Parties Section, September 2021 (\$250).

Love of Learning Conference Grant, The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi, September 2020 (\$500).

Excellence in Teaching Award, College of Behavioral and Social Sciences, University of Maryland, May 2020 (\$1000).

Dean's Fellowship, College of Behavioral and Social Sciences, University of Maryland, 2019-22 (\$5000 per annum).

Nominee, Graduate Student Representative, Phi Kappa Phi National Board of Directors, 2018.

Delegate, Phi Kappa Phi Leadership Summit - Denver, Colorado, 2017.

Undergraduate Summer Research Grant, University of Tennessee, 2015 (\$1500).

Service

To the Department

Regular Discussant, American Politics Workshop, University of Maryland, 2020-ongoing.

Graduate Student Association, Technology Officer, University of Maryland, 2020-2022.

Graduate Student Association, Co-chair, University of Maryland, 2019-2020.

Graduate Student Association, First Year Representative, University of Maryland, 2018-2019.

At Conferences

MPSA Annual Meeting, 2023. Panel Chair: *Race and Gender Representation*.

MPSA Annual Meeting, 2023. Panel Chair: *Punishment and Contested Justice*.

MPSA Annual Meeting, 2023. Discussant: *Electoral Institutions and Voting*.

MPSA Annual Meeting, 2023. Discussant: *Community Relationships, Civic Participation, and Obligations to Others*.

APSA Annual Meeting, 2021. Panel Chair: *Surveys and Measurement of Religion*.

University of Maryland Graduate Student Workshop. April 2021. Discussant.

University of Maryland Graduate Student Research Design Workshop. March 2021. Discussant.

To the University

Head of Scoring, High School Moot Court Competition, University of Maryland, May 6, 2023.

Student President, Phi Kappa Phi Chapter 22CP, University of Maryland, 2021-2023.

Student Vice President, Phi Kappa Phi Chapter 22CP, University of Maryland, 2019-2021.

Student Vice President, Phi Kappa Phi Chapter 2, University of Tennessee, 2016-2017.

To the Profession

Member, Phi Kappa Phi Council of Students, Aug. 2020-May 2022.

Advisor, Phi Kappa Phi Chapter Development (National Office), Aug. 2019-May 2020.

Leadership Consultant, Phi Kappa Phi Biannual Leadership Summit, Summer 2019.

To the Community

Mentor, Strive for College ([learn more here](#)), Sep. 2020-Present.

Conference Presentations and Invited Talks

SPSA = Southern Political Science Association • MPSA = Midwest Political Science Association • APSA = American Political Science Association

"Tracking Formation and Tracing Influence." APSA Annual Meeting. Aug. 2023. Los Angeles, CA.

"Vulnerable Legislators and Bipartisanship: Save Yourself or Save the Party?" (with Kris Miler). MPSA Annual Meeting. April 14, 2023. Chicago, IL.

"Grading on a (Logistic) Curve: A Life Cycle Theory of Interest Groups." MPSA Annual Meeting. April 14, 2023. Chicago, IL.

"Grading on a (Logistic) Curve: Expanding the Use of Population Ecology." SPSA Annual Meeting. Jan. 6, 2023. St. Petersburg, FL.

"Is it a Moot Point? Population Ecology and the Ripeness of Redistricting Litigation." SPSA Annual Meeting. Jan. 5, 2023. St. Petersburg, FL.

"Interspecific Competition and Counter-Mobilization in the Interest Universe." APSA Annual Meeting. Sep. 17, 2022. Montreal, Canada.

"Maximizing International Experiences for Students." Innovations in Teaching and Learning Conference. May 11, 2022. College Park, MD.

"Interspecific Competition in the Interest Universe: A New Consideration for Theories of Density Dependence." MPSA Annual Meeting. April 9, 2022. Chicago, IL.

"The Clerical Connection: Legislator Capacity and the Interests of Religious Institutions." MPSA Annual Meeting. April 9, 2022. Chicago, IL.

"Interest Group Activity and Redistricting Litigation in the United States" (with Jim Gimpel, Patrick Wohlfath, and Victoria Worley). MPSA Annual Meeting. April 9, 2022. Chicago, IL.

"Interspecific Competition in the Interest Universe: A New Consideration for Theories of Density Dependence." SPSA Annual Meeting. Jan. 14, 2022. Hybrid.

"The Clerical Connection: Legislator Capacity and the Interests of Religious Institutions." SPSA Annual Meeting. Jan. 14, 2022. Hybrid.

"The Antagonistic Advantage: Personality Representation in the U.S. Senate" (with Ryan W. Frazier). APSA Annual Meeting. Sep. 30 - Oct. 3, 2021. Virtual.

"Megachurch Influence in Politics: Variations Between States." APSA Annual Meeting. Sept. 30 - Oct. 3, 2021. Virtual.

"The Antagonistic Advantage: Personality Representation in the U.S. Senate" (with Ryan W. Frazier). MPSA Annual Meeting. April 16, 2021. Virtual.

"Moral Mobilization: Megachurches as Interest Groups in the States." MPSA Annual Meeting. April 16, 2021. Virtual.

"Righteous Representation: Megachurches as Interest Groups in the Tennessee General Assembly." SPSA Annual Meeting. Jan. 9, 2021. Virtual.

"Megachurch Influence in State Elections." University of Maryland Graduate Workshop. Oct. 26, 2020. College Park, MD.

"Understanding the Geographic Origin and Concentration of Redistricting Cases Filed in U.S. Courts" (with James G. Gimpel and Patrick W. Wohlfarth). Accepted for presentation at the MPSA Annual Meeting. April 16-19, 2020. Chicago, IL.¹

Other Work Experience

Professional

Program Coordinator, Chancellor's Honors Program, University of Tennessee, January - May, 2018.

Internships

U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Majority Staff, Summer 2017.

U.S. Senator Bob Corker, Constituent Services Office, Knoxville, TN, Spring 2017.

Professional Associations

American Political Science Association, 2018 - present.

National Capital Area Political Science Association, 2018 - present.

The Phi Beta Kappa Society (ΦBK), elected April 2017.

The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi ($\Phi\text{K}\Phi$), inducted November 2016.

Software Skills

\LaTeX , R, STATA, SPSS, HTML, GitHub, WordPress, Microsoft Office, Adobe Acrobat.

Last updated: August 30, 2023

¹Conference canceled due to COVID-19 pandemic of 2020.