2009 Senior Thesis Abstracts

Vote, Don’t Vote: Electoral Mobilization and Demobilization in American Politics
Dan Alexander

This research presents a formal theory of voter mobilization and demobilization with a model intended to approximate aspects of the American political system. The model developed describes the strategic interaction between parties when posed with incentives and constraints to mobilizing and demobilizing groups of potential voters. After performing comparative statistics on the model to understand its implications, we buttress these insights with knowledge of actual party-group alignments in American politics and establish the incentives for each party to mobilize or demobilize particular groups of citizens. The model enables us to determine which party is likely to find relative success for each given group and then looks to the 2004 election to see specific strategies in action. Ultimately, a case is presented for recasting the Republican Party’s anti-voter fraud efforts and emphasis on social issues as political maneuvers of demobilization and mobilization.

Institutions and Property Rights in America
Charis Fischer

New institutional economic theory emphasizes the importance of institutions in economic development. One of the most essential of these institutions is a strong system of property rights. The extremely robust protection of property rights in the United States is recognized as being a major factor in the enormous prosperity that this nation has enjoyed. However, within the United States, there is significant variation in how well property rights are protected. The goal of this project is to identify which institutions have an effect on the security of property rights, as measured by the foreclosure rate and housing prices. I collected data on institutions in 41 United States cities in the four states of Illinois, Missouri, New Jersey, and Michigan. My results indicate that the burglary rate and the school ranking have the most significant effect on these two measures of the strength of the institution of property rights.

The Causes of Ideological Drift on the U.S. Supreme Court
Brandon D. Harper

Political Scientists often grapple with questions surrounding judicial politics. In order to have a complete, informed, and comprehensive study of the United States Supreme Court, we must fully understand all aspects of the selection, nomination, agenda setting, and decision making process of justices. Recent Supreme Court nominations have revived the discussion of what information is relevant for discussion during confirmation hearings. One area of research that could aid in understanding each of the aforementioned areas necessary for an informed, comprehensive study of the Court is the study of ideological drift. Concretely identified by Lee Epstein, Andrew Martin, Jeff Segal, and Kevin Quinn, ideological drift is the phenomenon of justices moving across the ideological spectrum one they are seated at the Supreme Court bench. This paper takes off where Epstein and her colleagues left off – examining the possible causes of ideological drift. Hypothesizing drift is caused by changes in public
opinion, length of a Justice’s tenure, previous professional experience, changes in court heterogeneity, and ideological extremity, this paper ultimately concludes that while each appears to have a negligible effect on drift, the ultimate cause of ideological drift has yet to be determined.

The Sovereign Wealth of Nations
Zack Kaplan
Sovereign wealth funds, particular types of government-managed investment vehicles, have garnered increasing public attention as their portfolio sizes have swelled enormously over the past few decades. Much of this recent interest has been focused on the potential for foreign political involvement in public markets, with many fearing nefarious play by the world’s sovereign wealth fund holders, most of whom are non-Western authoritarian regimes. However, despite some speculation, little systematic attention has been paid to the investment motivations of these sovereign wealth funds. This paper postulates five distinct hypotheses as to why these funds might exist as extensions of their host governments’ domestic and foreign policies. Attention is paid to the ways a portfolio might be constructed to achieve each of these objectives. The second part of the paper uses this hypothetical framework to examine the investments and investment strategies of China’s various funds. A thorough examination of all of the known and forthcoming investments of China’s funds points to the fact that the country has largely acted as an economically motivated, rational investor despite much commentary hinting to its potential politically driven intentions.

The Need to be Let Alone: The Right to Privacy as a Necessary Condition for Autonomy
Shauna Kramer
What exactly is privacy? Why is the right to privacy so important to individuals? Why should privacy rights be valued and protected in America? This project explores the concepts of privacy and autonomy, as well as connections between the two. The author outlines a conception of autonomy based on the individual’s capacity for self-reflection, and a conception of privacy based on the freedom from interference. After formulating conceptions of each, the author asserts that the right to privacy is a necessary condition for autonomy to occur, and that it gains value from contributions to autonomy. This conceptual analysis goes on to include a discussion of the intrinsic and instrumental values of autonomy and privacy.

Although the project initially focuses on the abstract, the author soon transitions into the practical realm and places the discussion of privacy in the context of American society. The author examines the evaluation of privacy in American law and describes the current state of privacy rights in America. The author then provides an evaluation of the current protections of the right to privacy in American law, as well as an examination of several specific case studies of specific actions of the government that invade the privacy of individuals. The project concludes with a set of recommendations for how the right to privacy should be valued and protected in America, and the identification of areas where future legislation is most needed.

Is it enough?: The Two Political Channels to Solving Domestic Violence in India
Tess Mattingly
The political response to domestic violence in India can be defined through two channels, the formal policies of the government and the grassroot level efforts of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This essay investigates the connections between the state and NGOs through government-generated statistics, surveys of female empowerment NGOs and qualitative analysis of current Indian newspaper articles to determine where their agendas align and diverge to empower women from domestic violence. Through this multi-tiered data analysis I conclude that it is the interaction of the two that enables women to resist violence; when state and NGO efforts are aligned both achieve their ultimate goals.

The Impact of the International Criminal Court in Sudan
Victoria Morphy

My political science thesis is an in depth analysis of the impact of the International Criminal Court’s (ICC) in Sudan since the July 14th, 2008 indictment of President Omar al-Bashir. I studied both short-term changes as well as observed indicators of long-change to determine the effect of the court’s intervention. My short term measures include: rate of change in Internally Displaced Persons, number of humanitarian attacks, number of attacks on refugee camps and rate of change in troop deployment. My long-term indicators are policy change and modifications of the government’s rhetoric regarding the Darfur conflict. However, in an attempt to understand the future implications of these changes, I applied the five-phase spiral model to Sudan. Using this framework and the data collected, I was able to assess and analyze the impact of the ICC in Sudan thus far.

Return to Sender: The Ballot-Transit Problem of Overseas Military Voting and Partisan Motivations behind Internet-based Reforms
Cole Randle

This thesis provides a general theory suggesting that electoral interests of state lawmakers may explain why states pass laws allowing our armed forces to vote from overseas through an Internet-based system. Two general hypotheses were posed: (1) that the level of Republican control over state lawmaking institutions will be predictive of the likelihood of bill passage, and (2) that states with a higher proportion of military persons will be found to be more likely to pass laws allowing Internet-voting. Eight of the ten states that have passed specific statues to allow military Internet-voting were analyzed. Statistical analysis indicated that the relationship between GOP control of state lawmaking institutions and the likelihood of bill passage was not significant. The relative size of state military populations was not found to be significantly associated with bill passage either. However, other important trends were observed, and the model remains plausible. As more states take the initiative to pass laws allowing Internet-based voting for overseas military personnel, a more conclusive relationship may emerge, and this remains an important and timely area of study.

Poke the Vote: How to Use Facebook Registration Advertisements to Increase the Youth Vote
Kerry Rheinstein

The United States’ youth have historically remained disengaged from politics. Due to young people’s unique position in life, registration laws have disproportionately affected youth voter turnout by
increasing the costs of registering to vote. The Internet’s unparalleled flow of information and user-based nature make it a prime medium to relay information on how to register to vote. Moreover, unlike previous political attempts to communicate with young people, organizations using Internet media would reach young people on a forum they frequently use. This paper examines Rock the Vote’s 2008 Voter Registration advertisement campaign’s effectiveness at reaching and registering young people, in particular examining whom the advertisement best reaches. Additionally, this paper tests whether advertisements targeted to audiences yield higher response rates from young people on social networking sites like Facebook. If advertisements help young people navigate through complex voter registration procedures and, at the same time, finally address the unique issues of young people, perhaps the current Millennial generation will see the benefits of engaging in politics. Employing online social networking sites offers political organizations the opportunity to reach mass audiences with specific measures to reduce the costs of registering to vote, providing the first important step in finally reversing youth’s historic aversion to politics.

**Muslim Integration in Western Europe**
Julie Rosenfeld

Why are Muslim communities better-integrated in some European countries than in others? Muslims are currently the largest religious minority in Europe, but also the most severely disadvantaged in the European labor market. This paper presents an empirical analysis of the effects of three specific factors – antidiscrimination laws, citizenship requirements, and political activity and representation – on the success of Muslim integration in France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, and the United Kingdom. I use the unemployment disparity between Muslim immigrants and native European citizens to measure the success of Muslim integration in the five countries. The results of this analysis show that of the three factors studied, Muslim political representation has the greatest positive correlation with Muslim integration and reflects citizenship, as well as a high-level of societal investment and integration. Citizenship laws are denied access to the labor market, are unable to vote in elections or hold national office, and are not protected by national antidiscrimination laws. Finally, antidiscrimination policies are also an extremely important tool to increase employment, but they must prohibit discrimination on the basis of religion or religious beliefs in order to be effective for Muslim integration.

**Collaborative Institutions and the Mississippi River: A Model for a Sustainable Future?**
Ankoor Shah

The Mississippi River is one of America’s greatest natural resource. It is a source of pride and recreation for millions. Building sustainable, comprehensive models of resource management balancing every interest remains difficult. Collaborative institutions have arisen over the last thirty years to meet this challenge. The Upper Mississippi River Basin Association formed in 1972 and the Lower Mississippi River Conservation Committee formed in 1994 exemplify cooperative innovation. How effective are these institutions in promoting stakeholder cooperation? In answering this question, this study examines the structure and functions of both organizations in the context of Edward Weber’s *Pluralism By The Rules* (1998), which presents six rules for effective collaboration. Via Weber’s model, one sees the UMRBA possessing greater capacity to achieve cooperation through the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability
Program and the Environmental Management Program, both basin-wide programs. In contrast, the LMRCC lacks similar basin-wide programs; however, it exhibits entrepreneurialism with its Natural Resources-based Economic Development model integrating watershed restoration with economic development. Understanding collaboration’s effectiveness on the Mississippi River has serious implications for scholars developing solutions to protect America’s water resources.