2010 Senior Thesis Abstracts

**Persuaded by the Echoes of Their own Voices: How Cognitive Biases Crucially Influenced the Bush Administration’s Decision to Go to War with Iraq**

Greg Allen

This paper argues that the conventional wisdom of a broad failure of the U.S. intelligence community prior to the 2003 War in Iraq mistakenly ignores the oversized influence of the Pentagon’s Office of Special Plans, whose repeated and colossal errors in judgment were the direct cause of mistaken beliefs about the existence of Iraqi WMD and ties to terrorist organizations. This paper details six crucial erroneous judgments made by the Bush Administration’s intelligence analysts and evaluates the connection of those policies to the predictably irrational effects of cognitive bias. The cognitive biases approach offers a powerful explanation for why top administration officials not only made serious errors in judgment, but also ignored consistent and compelling evidence that contradicted their faulty assessments. The paper concludes that the errors made by intelligence analysts and the consumers of that intelligence neatly align with the predictions of a bounded rationality model that takes into account the effects of cognitive bias.

**The Effects of the Nonpartisan Blanket Primary on Electoral Change in Louisiana, 1964-2003**

Mark Richard Dudley

Do the institutional differences of state election laws help to explain the uneven process of electoral change in the Deep South during the last quarter of the 20th Century? Previous research on Southern electoral change has studied the effects of numerous variables within an assumed context of similar electoral institutions. This paper examines the unique institution of Louisiana’s nonpartisan blanket primary through a comparative study of Deep South state legislative elections between 1964 (the first election following the passage of the Civil Rights Act) and 2003 (the last election before Hurricane Katrina in 2005). This paper finds three initial effects of the nonpartisan blanket primary on electoral change that have faded with the increase in two-party competition: impact on candidate number, impact on party performance, and an impact as a direct result of the set of unique electoral situations created, such as single party run-off elections and candidate election through a single electoral primary.

**“One Man Acting Alone:” The Consolidation of the Empowered Executive in War and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1963**

Benjamin H. Fifield

This paper holds that the early Cold War period, beginning in 1945 and ending in 1963, marked the consolidation of an interpretation of the Executive Branch that vested in it substantial authority in the realm of war and foreign affairs at the expense of the Legislative branch. Although the controversial formation of that power put forth by the Truman Administration encountered considerable resistance in Congress and amongst the wider public, a mildly chastened version of the Truman Administration’s arguments were quietly advanced by President Eisenhower and his Cabinet during the mid-1950s. Subsequent Congressional acquiescence to this interpretation laid the groundwork for the arguments
about Executive authority in wartime that would be put to wider use in the Vietnam War. This shift in expectations affected not just Congress but the wider public as well, as displayed in the shift in rhetoric and arguments made by the leading opinionmakers of the era in response to instances of strong Executive action in the realm of foreign affairs and war.

**Exploring Causality: What is the Relationship Between Intellectual Property Rights and Foreign Direct Investment in Developed Economics**  
Vidhyarth Hariharan

Does increasing the strength of intellectual property rights (IPR) encourage foreign direct investment (FDI)? Canada and Japan, two developed countries, instituted dramatic overhauls to their IPR policies, which were followed by significant increases in research and developed (R&D) FDI to each country. This paper examines the assumptions necessary to infer causality from this correlation. I explore the role of intellectual property protection in affecting foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows in developed economies. Using two empirical case studies assessing Canada’s 1987 patent reforms and those in Japan in 1988, I evaluate whether the heightened level of protections encouraged greater FDI inflows. Using a combination of empirical data, historical case profiles and interviews with investment officers at multinational R&D firms, I explore the extent to which the IPR reforms in each country causally motivated subsequent FDI inflows. My research shows that not only did R&D FDI inflows rise significantly in the post-reform years, but also that firms in investment positions would have been particularly incentivized to increase their investment allocations because of these reforms.

**YouTube and Campaign Advertisements: Studying the Affect of Web Based Video on The Content of Campaign**  
Jake Lapperruque

This paper is a study of the impact of online video in presidential campaigns, specifically on the nature of campaign advertisements. Using the 2008 presidential election, I conduct a comparative study of the broadcast and online advertisements from the Obama and McCain campaigns, seeking to evaluate if there are differences in content between broadcast and online advertisements. The campaigns’ YouTube profiles were used as a data source; 998 campaign advertisements were viewed, totaling in over 53 hours of video. The collection of data was based upon predicted differences in content that would arise due to the inherent differences between broadcast and online advertisements; broadcast advertisements are passive and involuntary while online advertisements are active and voluntary. The prevalence of vote requests, volunteer requests, donation requests, issue stances, personal attacks, and mention of campaign events were all studied to evaluate the hypothesized differences between broadcast and online advertisements. The data yields a variety of findings, reflecting a significant divergence in content between broadcast and online advertisements in several areas. The study also demonstrates potential for change and development in political advertisements and campaigns as a whole as a result of the prevalent use of YouTube and online video.
**Portrayal of the Home in the Race for the House: How Congressional Candidates Present their Personal Lives to Voters**
Ruth Mandelbaum

While male candidates have traditionally portrayed themselves as “Family men” during their campaigns, female candidates, especially those with young children, must decide whether emphasizing their family lives will show that they are “family women” or will signal to the electorate that they may not have enough time to perform public duties. Previous literature has examined gender differences in the campaign strategy of Congressional candidates and has also studied the personal lives of Congressional candidates. This study is the first to extensively combine the two areas by examining the ways in which Congressional candidates portray their family lives during their campaigns using candidates from the 2004, 2006, and 2008 Congressional election cycles. Three methods were used: (1) content analysis of campaign commercials of 40 candidates; (2) content analysis of campaign websites of 63 candidates; and, (3) questionnaires sent to all female candidates in the three election cycles studied. In campaign commercials, women, especially Republican women, were far less likely to show or discuss members of their families than male candidates. On campaign websites, men and women tended to mention their families at the same rate, but women were more likely to mention their children and men were more likely to mention their spouses. Male and female Democrats were alike in the way in which they portrayed their families on their websites, while male and female Republicans diverged greatly. These findings have practical implications for the ways in which campaigns are run as well as theoretical implications involving the continued prevalence of gender stereotypes.

**Determinants of Energy Policymaking: Renewable Portfolio Standards and the Politics of Climate Change in the American States**
Jeremy Rogoff

While widespread attention has been paid to the federal government’s effort to adopt a nationwide climate-change policy, relatively little coverage has been given to the bodies that have already produced substantial global warming legislation: state governments. This paper examines Renewable Portfolio Standards (RPS), the primary policy tool over the past decade utilized by U.S. state actors. Several studies on the determinants of RPS adoption have been completed in the past two years. Rather than replicate the results yielded from those investigations, this study seeks to build on those findings, and determine what political, economic, social, and environmental factors cause states to adopt stringent and effective RPS policies. Over the course of the study, I first provide a brief overview of the policy, including its origins and the debate surrounding its effectiveness. After a brief review of the relevant theoretical and empirical literature, I present the qualitative experience of four states that span the timeline of state adopters over the last 11 years, since the first mandatory RPS was produced. Next, I present my findings from quantitative analysis done to assess the effect of certain factors on the stringency and effectiveness of a state’s portfolio standard. These results suggest that portfolio standards do not independently drive renewable energy generation. Finally, I conclude with policy and theoretical implications of the research findings, and offer directions for future investigation.
**A Failed Fairy Tale: Collective Action, Nationalism, and Democracy**
Viktoryia Schnose

What explains the divergence of outcomes in post-communist transitions? Why has Belarus failed to democratize despite similar institutional, cultural and historical legacies to other Central Eastern European countries? I argue that the failure to democratize in the post-communist context can be partially explained by the inability of political elites to overcome the collective action problem of getting enough citizens to participate in mass mobilization that aims at challenging the political status quo in favor of democratic reforms. Political elites that used nationalism as a mechanism to solve the collective action problem successfully transitioned to democracy (for example the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Poland and the Baltic States). When nationalism was not employed, post-communist transitions did not result in democracy as was the case in Belarus.

**Beyond Roll Call Voting: Descriptive Representation’s Substantive Impact**
Adam Susser

What constitutes representation? Is voting the “right way” all that is required of members of the United States Congress? Representation in Congress is about more than roll call voting and the overwhelming focus of scholarly inquiry on voting misses critical aspects of representation. While there is some scholarship on forms of representation beyond roll call voting, limited research exists on bill sponsorship; virtually no studies have systematically studied the impact of race and ethnicity on sponsorship of bills that focus on Latino-interests and African American-interest.

I argue that race and ethnicity are extremely important factors in determining whether legislators will introduce legislation that explicitly concerns racial issues. My research indicates that the race of an individual legislator has the greatest effect on the predicted number of African American-interest and Latino-interest legislation. Additionally, my research challenges the concept of “influence districts” for African Americans and provides limited support for these districts for Latinos. Regression analysis combined with case studies and correlation tests suggest that even when significant African American and Latino voting age populations exist, they may not be the best indicator of proper representation.

Finally, my examination of bill sponsorships from the 110th Congress indicates that African American legislators are more likely to sponsor legislation explicitly pertaining to African American racial issues than other representatives, and that there is no significant difference between Latinos and White representatives’ bill introductions when controlling for party and voting age populations. The reverse holds true for Latino issues, in that Latino legislators sponsor more Latino-interest bills, and there is no significant difference between African American and White legislators’ sponsorship of Latino interest bills. This outcome demonstrates that descriptive representation is critical to giving minority-interest legislation a chance to be considered.

**The Welfare State and Multicultural Policies: A Relationship of Recognition and Redress**
Amy Xu
State-level policies occur in strange packages. Previous literature and intuition suggest that policies with similar ideological intent occur together, but with regard to policies that focus upon minorities and the welfare state, this is often not the case. I regress per capita welfare spending in the American states against measures of multicultural policies (MCPs), which include affirmative action, bilingual education, gay marriage, and official English legislation. MCPs can be further categorized by the intent of policy, whether it is through recognition of rights or redress of previous social ills to minority groups. I analyze the data with three methods: studying MCPs as an overarching category, observing indices of recognition and redress policies, and using counterfactuals to predict the individual effect of a particular MCP in an American state. Results suggest potential validation of the theory and the negative relationship between MCPs and the welfare state – a result which may be attributed to the interacting effects of public opinion backlash and state fiscal constraints.