These are the Political Science graduate student mentors who are looking for undergraduate Research Assistants. Project descriptions and contact information are provided below.

# Alison Boehmer

apboehme@ucsd.edu

## Work as Political Control

**Project:**

My dissertation studies the relationship between structural workplace characteristics (e.g., the degree and kind of surveillance, the physical organization of workers) and workers' political activity in the United States. I argue that, as an implication of gendered-racial capitalism, the workplace can facilitate the repression, channeling, and constraining of worker political action both inside and outside of the workplace. My theory proposes the mechanisms through which and conditions under which workplaces exert such political control, and how workers exercise political agency within these structures. I study this relationship between work and political activity both generally and in the context of prison labor, due to the tight link between the carceral state and gendered-racial capitalism. Empirically, this is a multi-method project (i.e., I use both qualitative and quantitative data and analysis approaches); however, the two aspects of the project on which I seek assistance are qualitative: Pending IRB approval, research assistants will attend interviews I conduct with formerly incarcerated individuals and/or workers from the San Diego community, help with real-time note-taking, aid in the transcription process, and engage in an interpretive analysis of interviews. The second aspect on which I seek research assistance involves the collection and analysis of archived prison-based newspapers found on JSTOR's American Prison Newspapers archive.

**Mentorship:**

a) Common tasks required of Undergraduate Research Assistants for this project

Given IRB approval, RAs who attend interviews will travel with me to an interview site (in San Diego), help set-up recording devices/help to take real-time notes and reflections, and transcribe interview recordings. As an exercise, the RA team will also learn and engage in interpretive analysis of the transcriptions. (NOTE: If IRB does not approve of RA's attending interviews, RAs will still engage with the interviews through transcription and analysis. Furthermore, in this case, we will still discuss the interview process, field notes, and my reflexivity process so that RAs may still learn about the approach.)

In terms of engaging with the archived prison newspapers, RAs will download and run each newspaper edition through optical character recognition (OCR) software in Adobe, use keyword searches to identify relevant articles within the issues that discuss incarcerated people's experiences with and reflections on work and/or political activity in prison. RAs will then apply a qualitative "coding scheme" to relevant articles.

No previous experience with qualitative methods, labor/work-related scholarship, or (critical) prison studies is required, but those with interest in or experience with any of these topics are encouraged to apply. Prior to engaging in either empirical dimension of the project, RAs will read through and discuss a

brief "syllabus" (3-5 articles) covering the methodology and substantive concepts of the project, as well as a draft of my dissertation's theory chapter. Prior to engaging with any interview process, I will also provide you with "training sessions" based on how I was taught ethical ethnography.

b) The main goal of the Research Apprenticeship Program is to promote the education of undergraduate students, particularly in the realm of research within the field of political science. Our department, and the University of California more broadly, is committed to supporting diversity and equal opportunity in education. As a mentor, how would you contribute toward promoting undergraduates' education and research skills in an inclusive manner?

There are three elements built into the Research Apprenticeship Program project I propose that seek to promote undergraduates' education and research skills in an inclusive manner:

1) Teach useful skills and frameworks: As further detailed below, before RAs begin engaging in data collection or analysis for this project, we will read through and discuss a short "syllabus" that includes literature on both the qualitative methods we will practice and the substantive theories, ideas, and lived experiences on which we will be focusing. Additionally, I will hold at least one "training session" prior to RAs participating in any part of the interview process, which is based in the ethical ethnography practices in which I was trained. Through these two elements, students will be exposed to methodological approaches and substantively important topics through the research process. In this way, the project will not just extract labor from the students, but will seek to prioritize their learning through transparency, active discussion, and in-depth involvement in the research process.

2) Prioritize students' goals, input, and experiences: A primary tenet of this project is to minimize the extractive relationship between me/the project and the RAs; to ensure a collaborative and enriching environment for all involved, I will install mechanisms within the apprenticeship that prioritize students' goals, input, and experiences. To the end of prioritizing students' goals, at an initial meeting I will ask RAs to come prepared with their goals for the apprenticeship (i.e., skills they want to learn; any deliverables they would like to produce, like a writing sample for graduate school applications); in response, I will adjust the research project as possible so that they can meet such goals. Furthermore, I will distribute an anonymous feedback survey during week 5 so that the RA team can give me honest feedback on how I can better improve their apprenticeship experience, particularly in terms of the goals they set. To the end of prioritizing RAs' input, I will allot a portion of each check-in meeting to discussing how the project might be improved methodologically and substantively, as the RAs will have first-hand experience with the empirical dimensions of the project giving them unique and important perspectives. This time will be for RAs to speak freely and honestly about their concerns, frustrations, and ideas related to the project, as I firmly believe that it is my privilege to learn with, from, and alongside the research team. To the end of prioritizing RAs' experiences, because the content with which we will be engaging involves state violence, particularly against individuals who experience race, gender, and/or class-based subjugation, I will prioritize creating spaces for reflection and discussion—if the students so choose to participate. A central tenet of my work is that the "researcher" should actively involve her whole self in a project, that she should be changed as a person, thinker, and community member as a result of her research. This is sometimes a hard, exhausting, and vulnerable process that I want to acknowledge with the RAs. This might mean, depending on RA preferences, taking a few hours off of work during a week that deals with particularly difficult subject matter, discussing resources from scholar-activists who have confronted similar difficulties, or having a check-in meeting dedicated to discussing reflections—at which I may or may not be present, depending on RA preferences.

3) Model healthy, sustainable research practices: Another core tenet of this apprenticeship, as well as how I have led other undergraduate RA teams, is respect for the RAs' time and energy. This means I will be committed to balancing the goals of the project and my desire for RAs to get the most out of the experience, with the reality that many undergraduates are constantly balancing many time commitments—jobs, family care commitments, self-care and rest, etc. I will prioritize flexibility in two ways: 1) While some meetings will need to be held at designated times, most of the work will be remote and on the RAs' own time. If some weeks are busier than others, RAs will be encouraged to move hours/tasks around to accommodate their schedule. 2) I will prioritize process over product, meaning I will not be regularly checking RAs' "timesheets" or setting firm deadlines, but will instead attempt to "model by example" a research practice that focuses first on the process by which progress is made.

c) Graduate mentors will be asked to check in with undergraduate research assistants on a weekly basis to ensure they are staying connected and meeting mutually established deadlines. Please share how you plan to handle any challenges you encounter with your undergraduate research assistant(s).

Through my experience with leading a team of undergraduate RAs over the past year as part of a coauthorship with a professor, I have learned that the first step in handling challenges/problems is knowing where, how, and why they exist in the first place. Having consistent and varied forms of communication with RAs is crucial to identifying challenges/problems early; I do this in my current practice by 1) distributing anonymous feedback surveys, 2) encouraging the RAs to curate a space for their own discussion without me so that they can collectively discuss the challenges they are facing and come to me with them as a group, and 3) coming to check-in meetings having reviewed their previous work so that I can better anticipate challenges they are facing. Once learning that a challenge/problem exists, my general approach in solving it will be to propose a new process/solution to the RAs and then encourage RA input on the proposal. When I have done this with RA teams in the past, it has generated creative solutions with which the RAs have buy-in because they contributed to solving the problem by grounding it in their experience. Another general approach I will take in handling challenges is to foreground this apprenticeship as a learning experience for both the RAs and me. That is, I will be transparent, vulnerable, and humble to the end of communicating to the RAs both that I am subject to mistakes and that they hold invaluable knowledge from which I am learning and from which the project is greatly benefiting.

### POLI 30(D) not required

# Alison Sile Chen

sic015@ucsd.edu

How Authoritarian Institutional Shock Changes Judicial Practice: the Case of Hong Kong

**Project:**

This project studies how the sudden enactment of the National Security Law in Hong Kong influences judicial outcomes of Hong Kong courts. Undergrad research assistants (URAs) will help code case judgements from Hong Kong courts, or verify the coding by large-language models (LLM).

**Mentorship:**

URAs can get insights into advanced text analysis techniques and learn about the process of studying social science questions using LLM. URAs will be acknowledged in any publications (likely papers in political journals) this project produces. I will hold regular meetings with URAs to address any confusions regarding the coding or research process. The URAs may also consult me about they plan and documents if they apply for grad schools in political science.

### POLI 30(D) not required

# Duong Pham

dtp002@ucsd.edu

## The Rhetoric of "Democracy" in Autocratic Regimes: Sources, Manifestations, and Effects

**Project:**

Across the globe, autocrats are increasingly adopting the language of democracy to legitimize their rule. Notable examples include China's promotion of its "whole-process people's democracy", Kremlin's assertion that Russia's democracy is "the best" in the world, and Lee Hsien Loong's description of Singapore as "a democracy that works but adjusted when needed". My dissertation explores the sources, manifestations, and consequences of this phenomenon. The dissertation consists of three core components. First, I examine the incentives driving autocrats to adopt democratic rhetoric and explore the conditions under which this strategy becomes optimal. Second, I explore the mechanisms through which autocrats construct and disseminate democratic rhetoric to align with authoritarian governance. To achieve this, I employ text-as-data methods, combining qualitative analysis with natural language processing (NLP) techniques to examine political texts, leader speeches, and media content from selected autocratic regimes. Lastly, my dissertation assesses the effects of democratic rhetoric on public opinion through survey experiments and social media analysis, investigating how democratic rhetoric shapes policy preferences, perception of regime legitimacy, and citizens' preferences for democracy versus authoritarianism.

- Students who are interested in autocratic politics, autocratization, democratic backsliding, propaganda and information control are highly encouraged to apply.

- Students who have experience working with text data either qualitatively or quantitatively or those who are simply interested in learning how to do so are highly encouraged to apply.

- Students who are interested in politics in China, Vietnam, and Southeast Asia will greatly benefit from working with me (this is not a prerequisite for a successful application).

- I welcome ALL students of political science from various subfields. I will be enthusiastic to work with you, be responsible, and be responsive to your needs even when our interests do not fully overlap. My aim is to ensure that you gain valuable experience in political science research, regardless of your background or specific interests.

Undergraduate RAs will assist me with several or all of the following tasks, depending on their preferences, educational backgrounds, research experience, skill sets, and discussions with me.

1. Literature review: Finding relevant literature (books, articles); extracting key research designs, findings, and methods; writing summaries.

2. Case identification:

- Identifying cases where autocrats, aspiring autocrats, and autocratic governments redefine democracy;

- Qualitatively collecting background and context information on these cases.

3. Text data collection:

- Collecting (manually or through web-scraping) relevant government documents, leaders' speeches, as well as state-media content.

- For this task, applicants with (a) experience in programming, especially web scraping and (b) fluency in Chinese, Russian, and Vietnamese (or other non-English languages) are highly desirable (not required)

**Mentorship:**

As a mentor, how would you contribute toward promoting undergraduates' education and research skills in an inclusive manner?

As a mentor, I am committed to fostering an inclusive research environment where diversity is embraced and equity is prioritized. Regardless of their unique and outstanding backgrounds, all RAs will be treated with respect and care. I will ensure that all of them will be offered the best opportunities possible to grow as a researcher and a learner. I did receive training in EDI teaching and I intend to apply what I have learnt to support my RAs.

Working with me, ALL RAS will be able to:

1. Learn hands-on how to conduct scientific research:

- I will host 1 opening meeting to introduce all RAs to my dissertation project, clarify their questions, learn about their educational and research backgrounds, as well as discuss task assignment. Their preferences and needs shall be listened to and taken into careful consideration.

- I will host weekly meetings with all RAs during which we–as a team—will discuss in detail work progresses, challenges, as well as concrete goals and plans for all research tasks assigned to

RAs. During these meetings, I can offer guidance on how to develop critical skills in research design, data collection, analysis, and academic writing.

2. Receive individualized mentorship:

- I plan to open office hours for individual RAs where they can enjoy a more individualized experience of working with me. I will take advantage of these office hours to tailor more individualized working plans for every RAs, respond to their individual needs, and help them overcome individual challenges.

- In the Spring quarter, RAs can use office hours to discuss their seminar paper with me, where I will provide detailed guidance and constructive feedback. This one-on-one time will allow me to tailor my advice to their individual research interests, help refine their ideas, and offer support with research design, methods, or academic writing.

3. Obtain project management, team-work, and communication skills:

- As RAs assist me with my research, they will learn how a researcher converts a research idea into a project by breaking it into tasks, setting goals, constructing timelines, and adjusting workflows as challenges arise. As a team, we will together set up a system of project management, allowing RAs to learn how to build and implement such a system in practice.

- RAs will also develop important communication and collaboration skills while participating in this project. They will learn how to work as a team with me and other RAs.

- RAs will learn how to convey their ideas clearly with care and respect and how to provide constructive feedback.

4. Benefit from my knowledge and scholarly experience:

- As they work with me, RAs will gain insights into key areas of political science research, such as autocratic politics, propaganda, and democratic backsliding, all of which are my areas of expertise.

- They can also learn from me how to engage in any topic of interest theoretically and analytically

– a skill that I have been intensively practicing as a graduate student.

5. Build meaningful, lasting relationships with your fellow RAs and with me:

- I envision my team to be a close-knit one, where everyone including RAs and myself can feel safe and secure to be authentic with each other, where all of us can receive timely support and feel comfortable offering assistance to one another, and where long-lasting professional relationships are nurtured.


- As a queer, international student (in multiple countries already!), I have faced various challenges and struggles throughout my life. I would not have had the chance to be myself today without the tremendous support and understanding from so many people in my life, including professors and academic peers.

Hence, I am committed to providing my RAs with the same level of support that I have been fortunate to receive.

- I understand the value of mindful communication and shall commit to it. I intend to create a safe space where every member of the team, including all RAs and myself, can be open about our struggles. As a mentor, I will listen with care and make sure that we can collectively identify sources of challenges and work towards resolutions. I am always very open to feedback. Therefore, RAs are encouraged to voice their concerns at any time while working with me. They can choose to do so in a setting most comfortable for them. We can also together work with the department should we find any issue beyond our capacity to resolve.

**POLI 30(D) not required**

# Eric Thai

ethai@ucsd.edu

## Tariff Treatment in Free Trade Agreements

**Project:**

Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) like NAFTA, USMCA, US-Korea are important mechanism for globalization in the 21st century. Yet, little is understood regarding the treatment of tariffs in these agreements. Why do soybean tariffs in NAFTA get phased out over 5 years while for US-Korea is is 10 years? And do longer phaseout duration reduce the propensity for protectionist backlash? The main objective of this project is to document each product tariffs' phaseout treatment, and understanding the political and economic forces behind such treatment, as well as the political consequences.

My academic journey started with quality mentorship from graduate students back in my undergraduate institution. I had the opportunity to learn all of the hidden curriculum while I wrote my senior thesis from my friend, Fiona Ogunkoya, who was completing her dissertation at UC Davis. Our weekly talk inspired and motivated me to pursue research as a career. Without her mentorship, I would not have gained the necessary skillset to succeed in my graduate school applications. Her mentorship informs my approach with existing undergraduate mentees. I have the great opportunity to work with a few students, one of which have been assisting me on my project while I provide mentorship on data science skills.

**POLI 30(D) Not required**

**Mentorship:**

Common tasks required of Undergraduate Research Assistants for this project: (1) Researching and downloading PDF documents, (2) simple cleaning of excel files to ensure quality processing, and (3) very light round of hand coding tariff treatment categories.

As a mentor for the Research Apprenticeship Program, I will prioritize students' research interests (both substantive and methodological). With RAP, students will be a part of an ambitious data project on free trade agreements and will gain important coding skills in R and Python. We will have weekly or bi-monthly meetings where students will (1) update us on their progress with the data project and (2) share research ideas/progress. In those meeting, I plan on providing (1) short data science lessons and (2) feedback on students' research projects. If challenges were to arise, I would informally communicate with my undergraduate research assistant of the problem and come up with a mutually agreed-upon solution.

**POLI 30(D) not required**

# Furkan Benliogullari

fbenliog@ucsd.edu

## Territorial Disputes in the Shadow of Law: Effect of International Law on Territorial Claims, Use of Force, and Third-Party Responses

**Project:**

Territorial Disputes in the Shadow of Law: Effect of International Law on Territorial Claims, Use of Force, and Third-Party Responses

In this project, I aim to develop a theory of international law and its effect on states' behavior in territorial disputes and the behavior of third-party actors (states and international organizations) enforcing the law in response to the actions of disputant states. The project involves constructing a qualitative dataset on legal claims and third-party responses, as well as expanding an existing quantitative dataset on territorial disputes and legal claims.

I need research support in data collection and constructing the narratives. Additionally, I may need help with the literature review. I expect undergraduate research assistants to conduct research on UN resolutions and meeting records, regional organizations, and official statements of political leaders. If they are proficient in Spanish and French, it would be extra helpful. I also expect the research assistants to complete POLI30D.

**Mentorship:**

Undergraduate students will benefit from taking part in this research effort in two important ways. First, the research experience will help them gain competence in research on the UN and other IOs. Historically, the UN positions and other IR jobs are open to people who have certain financial power to withstand the difficulties of unpaid internships and have citizenship-stable immigration status to stay in the US. I am one of the people who couldn't afford to apply for those unpaid internships and struggled to find employment due to visa status. Thus, I am hoping that this project will contribute to the career goals of students who plan a career in IR and international organizations or international law and help them gain some of the skills that they would gain by doing unpaid internships after graduation. Second, this project involves qualitative and quantitative data collection and processing that data. If a student is planning to go to graduate school or work in a field that requires data skills, this project is a good opportunity to gain those skills and have practical experience.

I believe that researchers learn most and best when they face the research challenges themselves. For this project, I am preparing training material and research protocol for the undergraduate research assistants to ensure consistency, prepare them for the assignments, and make their job easier. I am planning to conduct regular feedback meetings to see how the work is going and what the research assistants are doing and feeling. If they encounter any problem in the course of the work, we should solve the problem together by understanding the issue and coming up with a solution that is acceptable to the research assistant. One of the primary goals of their work is to learn and benefit from the project. Thus, I can ensure that any assignment during the project will maintain these objectives and make life manageable for them.

**POLI 30(D) required**

# Jesus E. Rojas Venzor

jrojasve@ucsd.edu

## Security Cooperation on Migration: The Cooperation Arrangements on Migration (CAMs) Dataset

**Project:**

As a mentor, I would contribute to our undergraduates' educational experience by exposing them to policy making and the modes of international cooperation on crucial issues such as migration. The CAMs Dataset gathers policies from 11 different European states with over 95 partner states across the world from 1990-2015, allowing our students to engage with time-and-actor-varying policy-making. The variation of the dataset will expose students to a wide range of views in a safe environment. Students will also learn how to identify preferences and goals throughout governments' policy descriptions—which is what students will engage with—and learn how to code a dataset in a replicable and useful way. Their research skills will be improved by exposing them to the creation of the dataset, any complications that arise, and how such data is incorporated into a research design meant to improve our understanding of a complex international issue.

**POLI 30(D) not required**

**Mentorship:**

Any challenges I encounter with undergraduate RAs will be solved in a respectful and understanding matter. As a former UCSD and RAP participant, I faced challenges that were resolved by communicating weekly, having a larger monthly meeting, and being honest about project expectations. If this does not resolve an issue with the RA, I am happy to reorganize their project responsibilities to better fit their skillset while making sure to maintain a positive experience for other RAs.

# Theodoros Ntounias

[tdounias@ucsd.edu](mailto:tdounias@ucsd.edu)

## Aspiring Autocrats and Local Government in Eastern Europe

**Mentorship:**

I am committed to promoting undergraduates' education and research skills in an inclusive manner. My plans include the following:

1. Weekly meetings with URAs, in a format of their choosing (remote/in person) to go through their progress with their own research, and explain future tasks.

2. My goal is that URAs will come away with the following skills:

      a. Identify common issues with data gathering and cleaning procedures.
      b. Interpret and Organize data in a machine-legible fashion.
      c. Define and Illustrate basic concepts related to democratic backsliding.
      d. Explain local government structures, especially with regards to the case of Poland.

3. I commit to flexibility with regards to URA schedules, as long as basic deadlines are kept; students will be able to adapt their work according to their own needs and capacity (e.g. taking time off for family/care, focusing on a different class, working part-time in other employment, etc.)

4. I am an able-bodied Southern European cishet man from Greece, with American citizenship, who moved to this country for study. As such I recognize my privilege in many aspects of my identity, and commit to working in order to better understand the limitations that my students may face. However, I also note that my position as a non-native English language speaker, and a de facto foreigner, allows me to engage with students from similar backgrounds and guide them in better conducting research in the context of a US university institution.

My initial plans for engaging with students have been outlined above. However, in order to handle challenges with my undergraduate research assistants, I have access to several resources. First, Zain Sharifi, the undergraduate advisor for the department of Political Science. Second, my own advisors, mentors, and fellow graduate students who have previously engaged with undergraduate research assistants. Third, the Teaching and Learning Center offers multiple resources for educators, and hands-on interventions in case my communication and mutual understanding with my undergrad RA fails. In addition, I commit to my duty as a mandatory reporter under California law, and recognize that in extreme instances I may have to report on private interactions with my URAs.

My research focuses on how aspiring autocrats in European countries, once duly elected, proceed with an agenda of fiscal recentralization as part of their broader executive aggrandizement strategy. Undergraduate Research Assistants (URA) would assist in the second part of my project, where I focus on Poland as a case study. Specifically, I examine how aspiring autocrats target subnational grants to their allies in municipal governments, with the goal of suppressing opposition contention. While

knowledge of Polish is not necessary for this project, it will be extremely useful, and I encourage any students with this linguistic skill to apply.

URAs will be called upon to complete the following tasks:

1. Assist in cleaning Polish municipal elections data by hand-coding party affiliation.
2. Help train a deep learning classifier to predict partisanship.
3. Contact local ministries across Eastern Europe by email and submit data requests.
4. Conduct basic scans of the literature on democratic backsliding; collect any new research on this subject in a shared Zotero file.

**POLI 30(D) not required**

# Wendy Wagner

wwagner@ucsd.edu

## No War, Yet No Peace: How States and Armed Groups Coexist

Project:

For many countries, statehood is characterized by far less than full domestic authority with a state-held monopoly on violence. In fact, in many places around the world, armed rebel groups exist and persist autonomously alongside central governments holding at times an extensive degree of domestic authority. My dissertation investigates when and how states and rebel groups coexist. Specifically, I examine how autonomous armed groups persist without formal peace agreements and when the resulting governance arrangements are likely to last. I develop a theory for how state and non-state armed actors divide territorial and functional authority and how this allows them at times to settle into somewhat peaceful – albeit competitive – coexistence. In this research project, students will be exposed to the basics of new data set development, they will be closely involved with researching information on armed groups and making coding decisions along the way. We will work with both Excel and more advanced software like R to structure and then analyze the data.

As a mentor, I provide my RAs with training in both Excel and R according to the needs of the research project. I guide them through the process of independent case research, writing case summaries, and contributing to large scale data collection. Students are guided through initial trainings to create equitable conditions allowing each team member to contribute equally and benefit personally from the training provided. Weekly check-ins are meant to provide opportunities for feedback and maintaining project milestones. Finally, my approach to students is holistic, viewing them as individuals with lives that may interfere with duties and I am flexible to react to any unforeseen complications. Mutually established expectations and a mentoring guide will help us resolve issues should they arise.

**POLI 30(D) not required, students should have knowledge of Microsoft Excel**