

## Political Science Capstone Presentations

May 7<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 in Xavier 150

May 9<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 in Xavier 150

Zanon Fulbright (6:10-6:25)	<i>The Media's Questionable Influence</i>	Austin Beiermann (6:10-6:30)	<i>Local Political Organizations &amp; Washington State Campaign Finance Systems: Reasons for Reform</i>
Zac Webb (6:25-6:40)	<i>The Evergreen Commonwealth</i>	Jack Rose (6:30-6:45)	<i>Money v. Messaging: School Funding Campaigns</i>
Angela Watson (6:40-7:00)	<i>Educational Opportunity Disparities Among Students of Color: A Case Study in Washington State</i>	Keith Godat (6:45-7:05)	<i>Refuge at Malheur: Violence &amp; Messaging</i>
Natalie Hull (7:00-7:15)	<i>Modern Media and Voters: How Satirical News Sources Impact Voter Knowledge, Activity, and Opinion</i>	Bailey Takacs (7:05-7:20)	<i>Federal, State &amp; Local Government: Justifying Support for Considerable Authority</i>
Lottie Duren (7:15-7:35)	<i>Shades of Ignorance: A Study of American Policy on the Armenian Genocide</i>	Ryan Frost (7:20-7:40)	<i>The Hidden Costs of Swapping from a Defined Benefit Plan to a Defined Contribution Plan</i>
James Russell, Jr. (7:35-7:50)	<i>Is There Preference Getting Politics From Hard News or Soft News?</i>	Quenessa Long (7:00-7:55)	<i>Hip Hop: The Language of the People, The Language of the Voters</i>
Emmanuel Saah (7:50-8:05)	<i>Political Competition &amp; Policy Outcomes in the U.S.</i>		

### Abstracts

#### *The Media's Questionable Influence by Zanon Fulbright*

One of the most prevalent issues in the United States is the topic of mass shootings and gun violence. Mass shootings are heinous acts that receive an insurmountable amount of media attention. Since the events are covered so vastly, the media can affect how the event is portrayed due to the fact that virtually everyone in America is obtaining the information from various media sources post-attack. If the perpetrator of a mass shooting is non-white, or is presumed to have a mental illness, the media will make that aspect a focal point in their coverage and will thus lead to a negative public discourse aimed at the entire population of mentally ill individuals or those who are of the same race as the gunman. There will be a randomly selected group of individuals to participate in the study. They will be asked various questions regarding their attitudes toward race and mass shootings, and mental illness and mass shootings. The three cases that the individuals will examine are the coverages of the Virginia Tech shooting, Orlando nightclub shooting, and the Aurora movie theatre shooting. The survey will then ask them virtually the same questions after experiencing all of the

coverages. Whether or not their attitudes change as a result of experiencing the different coverages of the mass shootings will determine the validity of the hypothesis.

### *The Evergreen Commonwealth by Zac Webb*

Washington and Virginia are two states that have very similar attributes in regard to population size, GDP, and median income, but are they as similar when it comes to education funding and does the state's political ideology have any connection to the funding? I believe that the political ideology of the states has a direct impact on education funding and teacher compensation. I think that Washington and Virginia will prove to be dominated by the same political party, but Virginia will have higher education funding on state and local levels of government because the dominant political party will be more consistent across the whole state compared to Washington, which will be shown to significantly help school funding in Virginia. I compared the education system of each state in great detail to get an understanding of how they both worked and how the state allocated funds to the districts, along with how the districts gained local revenue through taxes, levies, and bonds. Following this background information I have a plan to research and collect data on past elections and legislation to see how legislators voted for education funding bills and if this legislation got passed. Finally, I would conduct a survey of the voters in each county across Washington and Virginia to see how voters in each county view education funding, how they believe the state should go about funding schools, and what they deemed their political ideology to be. All of this research will provide me with an answer as to whether the political ideology of two similar states differ in education funding and teaching compensation.

### *Educational Opportunity Disparities Among Students of Color: A Case Study in Washington State*

This is a case study that takes two school districts in Washington State, both similar in size but differing in racial makeup. The Puyallup school district that reports that 60% of their racial makeup are students who identify as white, and the Federal way school district that reports that only 28% of students identify as white. This report looks at the relationship between race and educational disparities among students of color, to see if there is a correlation between the racial makeup of a school district and the number of students who participate (and how they racially identify themselves) in higher education programs. This report looks at the higher education opportunities that both school districts offer to their high school students, this report also looks specifically at the racial makeup of the students who choose to participate in higher education options. In this report, I have looked at the reported number of students who have participated in these programs in the most recent school year (2016-2017) and compared them looking for any significant percentage changes between the makeup of school district as a whole, and the students who choose to participate in these programs. By looking at these two districts I am looking to see the difference that racial makeup plays in students of color's choice of pursuing the options that their school district offers them. It is my hypotheses that the even among a high minority school district that there will be more white students that participate in these higher education opportunities. Based on my finding I have found my hypotheses wrong as there seems to be no major differences in the students who participate in these programs that would suggest that students of color are at a disadvantage in either school district.

### *Modern Media and Voters: How Satirical News Sources Impact Voter Knowledge, Activity, and Opinion*

The paper was proposed in order to understand how different sources of news media affect the voting population. The topic this research concerns is based on my research question: Does political comedy and satire positively contribute to voter's interaction with politics? I hypothesized that voters who engage regularly with political comedy will be more involved, informed, and more likely to contribute to elections and discourse. I first analyzed different literature sources to draw out conclusions that others have found, and created a hypothetical experiment to measure the accuracy of my claim. In my research, I found multiple sources who through analysis or conducting experiments, found results that substantiated my claim. Depending on the results

of my desired experiment, my hypothesis may could be confirmed or disclaimed. If the results show that political comedy draws our greater knowledge and inclination towards politics, my hypothesis would be correct. If this were the case, I would be able to interpret why my hypothesis was accurate, using my results and the analyzed literature.

*Money vs Messaging: School Funding Campaigns by Jack Rose*

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*Is There Preference Getting Politics From Hard or Soft News? By James Russell, Jr.*

Do people have a better understanding of politics when using sources from popular culture or from more traditional formats? I will use a survey conducted at Pacific Lutheran University focusing on PLU students. The PLU students input/opinion will be collected to see if people understand politics better through popular culture or traditional media. The participants' responses will give an insight if the hypothesis is proven or failed.

*Political Competition & Policy Outcomes in the U.S. by Emmanuel Saah*

The research seeks to explore political competition as a method of measurement of outcome and impact on policy. Political competition as a determining factor in the policy process will get the most prepared politicians into office resulting in the creation of good policy. Policy outcomes as a measurement will determine whether a politician's term in office was marked by efficiency or inefficiency. In this capacity politicians will be held more accountable to the voters. Looking at three counties within the U.S that demonstrated different voting behavior during federal presidential elections, I determine how political competition is going to be a determining factor on schooling (graduation rate), transportation (in-state), and the economy (in terms of employment and wages).

*Local Political Organizations & Washington State Campaign Finance Systems: Reasons for Reform by Austin Beiermann*

In 2017 there was a huge upswing in the number of campaign finance complaints submitted to Washington State's Public Disclosure Commission. Through an analysis of all of the campaign finance complaints filed against Local Political Organizations in quarter 4 of 2017 it was found that 96% of the complaints were for failure to report expenditure or contributions in a timely manner. A campaign finance complaint often stall the operations of political party organizations even if they are dismissed. The vast majority of the complaints were put in by one person and affected organizations of all size from small who raised \$0.00 in 2017 and large that raised over \$45,000. The findings of this study highlight the areas where campaign finance reform needs to be focused if Washington State is to have a system where political party organizations can flourish and thrive.

*Shades of Ignorance: A Study of American Policy on the Armenian Genocide by Lottie Duren*

When the Armenian people were massacred by the Young Turks in the Ottoman Empire during World War 1, the world looked the other way, because there were other battles to be fought. But since that time, and especially since the Holocaust, states have renounced Turkey for building a country on the grounds of a genocide. However, the United States has neglected to join the international community in condemning the genocide of the Armenian people, even though statements are made on the subject and Congress sees bills for the recognition of the genocide on its anniversary every year. In this study, I seek to understand how the American political party system has affected this lack of recognition, or ignorance, by examining presidential statements and congressional actions. I am specifically answering the questions of whether the major American political parties take different stances on the recognition of the genocide, and if so, what may be motivations for these different platforms.

*Refuge at Malheur: Violence and Messaging by Keith Godat*

Focusing on the occupation of the Malheur Wildlife Refuge, this paper attempts to find a correlation between the public statements of the occupiers, law enforcement officials, and politicians relative to the low level of violence during the occupation. I have used the content analysis software LIWC2015 and transcripts of publicly available statements and dialogs to attempt to find this relationship. Although much has happened post-occupation, I have limited myself solely to statements made during the occupation.

*Federal, State & Local Government: Justifying Support for Considerable Authority by Bailey Takacs*

There has been a strong push across the United States to swap our public pensions away from defined benefit plans, and into defined contribution plans. Backers of this idea point to the growing unfunded pension liabilities facing states, but they fail to factor in the enormous costs that a switch of that magnitude would entail. A pension plans' main goals are to get the most out of each dollar being contributed to the plan, and to create a secure retirement for employees who can continue to be active economic participants after they leave the workforce. These goals are highly unlikely to occur with a DC plan being the primary retirement mechanism because my research revealed that DC plans are at least 20% less efficient in delivering retirement benefits. This paper further examines the costs accompanying the transition from a defined benefit (DB) plan to a defined contribution (DC) plan and explores the cost difference of these two plan types in delivering retirement benefits.

**The Hidden Costs of Swapping from a Defined Benefit Plan to a Defined Contribution Plan by Ryan Frost**

There has been a strong push across the United States to swap our public pensions away from defined benefit plans, and into defined contribution plans. Backers of this idea point to the growing unfunded pension liabilities facing states, but they fail to factor in the enormous costs that a switch of that magnitude would entail. A pension plans' main goals are to get the most out of each dollar being contributed to the plan, and to create a secure retirement for employees who can continue to be active economic participants after they leave the workforce. These goals are highly unlikely to occur with a DC plan being the primary retirement mechanism because my research revealed that DC plans are at least 20% less efficient in delivering retirement benefits. This paper further examines the costs accompanying the transition from a defined benefit (DB) plan to a defined contribution (DC) plan and explores the cost difference of these two plan types in delivering retirement benefits.

*Hip Hop: The Language of the People, The Language of the Voters by Quenessa Long*

One of the main elements of Hip Hop is emceeing. Emceeing, or now more commonly known as rapping, is the art form of using words as a form of expression. There have been many theories about the intent of this expression, if it is meant to be used as a means to discuss community needs, political statements, or as a tool for education. Most believe that there is a fusion of the three, with one element standing out as central to them. No matter what you believe Hip-Hop to be intended for all scholars who have studied Hip-Hop agree, that it influences those who listen to it to react through either emotion or action. Around federal election periods, the

amount of “political rap” or rap centered on making political statements rises. I believe that by studying the lyrics of different influential Hip-Hop artists that we will be able to discern a parallel of the political opinions of voters based on the rap artist that they most highly favor. I believe that through Rap as a tool of social **influence**, we will be able to spot a trend of voter behavior within communities that listen to Hip-Hop music. It is difficult to isolate voting behavior based on one singular factor, but I believe that through different methods we will be able to see a significant connection between music and politics as has been noted in the past. My hypothesis is that understanding rap as a political tool that influenced the 2016 presidential will provide insight to future federal campaigns on how to attract the “Hip-Hop vote” or the vote of those who listen to rap music.