



2020-2021

**COLLEGE OF
SOCIAL SCIENCE
AWARDS**

2020-2021

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student Jasmine Jordan**
Department of Political Science

**Dr. Cristina Bodea and
Dr. Andrew Kerner with students
Zac Ozormoor and Lillian Meng**
Department of Political Science



RISING STAR RESEARCH AWARD

SELECTION CRITERIA

This award recognizes early in career, tenure system faculty for research that has resulted in notable products such as high quality peer-reviewed publication(s), grant funding, and/or media appearances. This faculty member demonstrates innovative or transformative achievement beyond the norm.

DR. CAITLIN CAVANAGH

**ASSISTANT PROFESSOR
SCHOOL OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE**



The justice system, and the ideologies behind judicial policies, have been fueled by innovative and nuanced ways of thinking. This means pulling together various aspects and perspectives on certain social constructs; pooling together a wealth of information from various schools of thought; and being able to curate this culmination of ideas into a cohesive, well-formulated act that directly affects the public in a positive manner. Caitlin Cavanagh—an Assistant Professor in the School of Criminal Justice at Michigan State University—is the embodiment of this type of forward thinking, earning her the CSS Rising Star Research Award: an award given to researchers who've demonstrated innovative or transformative achievements beyond the norm.

Over the past several years, Cavanagh has invested her time and mind into getting at the heart of adolescent crime. It is here in the stage of life between childhood and adulthood during which one develops their social skills, as well as preliminary attitudes toward the justice system. These processes are the foundation for Cavanagh's work, with a background in Childhood Development and a specialty in Adolescence. "I think adolescence is a really interesting point in the lifespan, it's what we call a 'sensitive period,'" said Cavanagh. "It's a period of time where there's rapid brain development; rapid cognitive development; the salience of peers and social rewards is really high, it's a time that's really meaningful in your life."

Cavanagh focuses on the family aspect of the juvenile justice system—delving into the ways in which the justice system can be restructured to support families when a child is arrested. In contrast to when an adult is arrested, children who face legal trouble also create ripples within the child's family, often shaking the foundation of the entire family structure during a time when relationships between parents and adolescents naturally shift. This grounded, family-centric approach to understanding juvenile justice is what adds nuance to her work. With a multitude of published studies surrounding the intersection of topics regarding youth, families,

and criminal behavior, Cavanagh is destined to create ripples in the ways lawmakers think and alter the foundation on which laws are made in relation to youths.

Cavanagh is still pushing the envelope in her work, as she is now focused on two new research topics. "One thing that I want to innovate is thinking more about how the justice system can better accommodate families, rather than forcing families inside the rigid box of what they need to do to fulfill the system's requirements," said Cavanagh. By finding ways for the court and the families to develop a mutual understanding—treating and seeing one another as partners—Cavanagh hopes to create a dynamic which better accommodates, above all else, the rehabilitation of the children themselves, especially marginalized children. Additionally, Cavanagh is focused on the relationship—or lack thereof—between the child welfare systems and the juvenile justice system. Some youth are served by both systems, yet the systems themselves have little communication at present. "Those two systems basically don't talk to each other—at all," said Cavanagh. "Youth can be getting a hodgepodge of treatment strategies based on what they're receiving in the child welfare system and the juvenile justice system. I'd like to see more coordination between both systems to make sure we're maximizing resources." Cavanagh is currently starting a collaboration with Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) to augment her collaboration with the Ingham County 30th Circuit Court to create that cohesion between the two systems to have a more integrated system of childcare.

It can be inferred that this won't be the last award Cavanagh receives for her amazing work, yet she still feels grateful to be a recipient. "I'm definitely honored to receive this award," said Cavanagh. "It is nice to see my research recognized, but it's also nice to see the type of research I do being recognized—whether it's me or not, I'm glad that community-based research, that's intended to improve the lives of youth and their families, I'm glad that's getting recognition."



GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH AWARD

SELECTION CRITERIA

This award recognizes a graduate student who has conducted student initiated and led original research that demonstrates a clear potential for continued research excellence, while demonstrating conceptual and/or methodological rigor. Special consideration was given to work that incorporates emerging scholarly perspectives or interdisciplinary approaches.

ANH SY HUY LE

PHD STUDENT
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY



Anh Sy Huy Le, a PhD student in the Department of History, has won the 2021 College of Social Science Graduate Student Research Award for his dissertation entitled, “Taming the Intractable”: Chinese Migrants, Inter-Asian Interactions, and the Transformation of French Rule in Colonial Vietnam, 1862-1954.”

The award recognizes a graduate student within the College whose original research demonstrates a clear potential for continued research excellence and incorporates emerging scholarly perspectives or interdisciplinary approaches.

Le’s dissertation is the first to explore how Chinese immigrants were instrumental in the transformation of Saigon-Cholon, a large city in Southern Vietnam, into a global port city during France’s colonial rule over the country. Employing archival research from Vietnam, Singapore, and China, Le’s research centers Asian perspectives in understanding the political and social transformations of Saigon-Cholon during this period.

“Anh’s research, in short, transforms our understanding of greater China and its inter-Asian connections, while offering new theoretical possibilities for the study of colonial modernity,” explained Dr. Charles Keith, the associate professor in the Department of History who serves as Le’s advisor.

“His research reflects deeply interdisciplinary sensibilities and the rigorous use of social science theory and methodologies. He is the model of a successful and impactful doctoral student,” Dr. Keith continued.

Le, a Vietnamese citizen, joined MSU’s campus in 2015 to start his PhD program. From the summer of 2018 through the summer of 2019, Le traveled to China, Singapore and Vietnam to conduct fieldwork on the topic, funded by the Mellon International Dissertation Research Fellowship. An experienced researcher, Le has already published one peer-reviewed article and has two additional articles forthcoming.

“We had a number of outstanding nominations for this year’s award and the selection committee agreed that Anh and his research captured the essence of this award,” said Dr. Anna Maria Santiago, the Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies in the College of Social Science. “We congratulate him on his innovative work that extends knowledge about Chinese migrants and their economic and social world in post-colonial Vietnam.”

The College of Social Science Graduate Research Award is granted annually, and all social science PhD students in their third year or higher are eligible for consideration, as well as exceptional Master’s students.



GRADUATE STUDENT TEACHING AWARD

SELECTION CRITERIA

This award recognizes a graduate student who has demonstrated evidence of dedication to instruction through experimentation and successful implementation of innovative techniques and/or contribution to the scholarship of teaching and learning, including experiential learning; and evidence of excellence in instruction as demonstrated by the impact on students' careers and colleagues' teaching/advising practices.

MARK SUCHYTA

PHD STUDENT
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY



Mark Suchyta knew even as an undergraduate that he wanted to be a university professor. Now about to complete his PhD, Suchyta's focus, determination and innovation have earned him the College of Social Science's Graduate Student Teaching Award for 2020-2021.

"One of the most impactful things we can do as academics is to be a good teacher," Suchyta said. "A lot of people go into social science interested in making the world a better place and having an influence. Many focus on research and getting published but they may take for granted the positive contributions they can make in a classroom. Being a teacher is an honor and a privilege."

Suchyta's engaging teaching style caught the attention of the College award reviewers who found his students' "rave reviews" revealed a strong teaching philosophy and a wide breath of experience.

"You and your approach to teaching captured the essence of this award. Congratulations on your innovative work in the classroom!" wrote Dr. Anna Maria Santiago, Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies.

The reviewers also found Suchyta's teaching style and experience especially well suited to the COVID era when most learning moved quickly to online only.

"His dedication to perfecting online teaching environments is admirable and the additional work put in to creating online social connections and cohort togetherness is particularly relevant and necessary during our unprecedented times," one reviewer wrote.

Suchyta was nominated for the award by University Distinguished Professor of Sociology Thomas Dietz and Sociology Chair Aaron McCright.

"Mark is incredibly skilled at traditional classroom teaching. But he is extraordinary as an online teacher. When I needed to move a course online because of the pandemic, I was amazed at the

depth of his insights about not only the themes and structure of the course, but about the many details of organization and pacing that make a huge difference to online students. I attribute much of the success of my first online course to what I learned from Mark," Dr. Dietz said. "He has deep insights on how the philosophy and goals of a course must be translated into structures and practices to make online teaching effective."

Suchyta himself describes his teaching philosophy as student-centered: making sure he is not just disseminating information but that the students are engaged in the curriculum. For instance, in his Animal, People and Society course, when Suchyta realized half the students in his class were majoring in Zoology, he reached out to MSU Sociology alumnus Dr. Stephen Vrla who is now an educator at the Detroit Zoo. Together they created a segment focusing on zoo education.

"I try to create a diverse body of assignments and assessments to appeal to different learning styles," Suchyta said.

It also matters to Suchyta that, in high school, he was not the best student. He attended Wayne State University and then transferred to the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. In a surprise to his parents, Suchyta went on to graduate school at Penn State. After receiving his master of arts degree, he worked as a social worker.

"As an undergrad, I was so inspired by my professors and thought 'I could do that,' he remembers. "I had a brief career in social work and continue to use those skills as well."

Suchyta, who is dual enrolled in Sociology and the Environmental Science and Policy Program with a graduate specialization in Animal Studies, will complete his studies this summer and hopes to find a position teaching in a state school.

"I would love to continue teaching and my dream would be at a regional or state school," Suchyta said.



**DEAN'S
DIVERSITY AND
INCLUSION
EXCELLENCE
AWARD:
UNDERGRADUATE
STUDENT**

SELECTION CRITERIA

This award recognizes an undergraduate student who has played a significant role in advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion, by demonstrating activities which may include serving underrepresented populations, developing or implementing innovative programs that enhance participation and opportunity, or enhancing the ability and effectiveness of the College to be an inclusive and welcoming environment.

JASMINE JORDAN

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE



Political Science senior Jasmine Jordan is the winner of the College of Social Science's 2021 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusive Excellence Undergraduate Student Award. Since joining MSU in 2017, Jasmine has committed herself to improving the campus experience for students of color, students with disabilities, and other students.

As a sophomore, Jordan served on the Executive Board of the MSU Tower Guard, for which she served as a liaison for the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities (RCPD). She continued to make change in this area, serving as the co-president of the Council of Students with Disabilities (CSD), a campus organization that identifies and addresses challenges that students with disabilities encounter, beyond the RCPD's jurisdiction.

A student with a disability herself, Jordan is passionate about dispelling stereotypes students like herself often face, and fighting for better representation and understanding of disabled students of color. Due to her advocacy work in this area, Jasmine was also nominated as the College of Social Science's very first Diversity Torch in July 2020, in honor of Disability Independence Day.

Jordan is also a member of the Bridge Scholars, an organization of students of color and allies in the Social Science Scholars Program committed to making diversity, equity and inclusion central to the program. Through the program, Jasmine is involved in two separate research projects centering on racial justice: one exploring how racial minorities are misrepresented in high school history textbooks, and the other looking at housing segregation among MSU students.

Due to her work on the intersection of racism and ableism, Jasmine was invited to serve on MSU President Samuel L. Stanley's Racial Equity Task Force in the summer of 2020. Jasmine also won the prestigious Gates-Cambridge scholarship, and will be attending Cambridge University in England starting fall 2021.

After graduating, Jasmine hopes to pursue a career as a civil rights attorney, continuing her legacy of fighting for diversity, equity and inclusion wherever she goes.

"Jasmine is a diversity, equity, and inclusion champion whose leadership in several organizations and committees, including the Council of Students with Disabilities (MSU), The Good Counsel (New York), the Honors College Inclusive Excellence Strategic Committee, Tower Guard, and the Black Alumni Student Association, has helped make MSU a more inclusive space," said Dr. Nwando Achebe, the Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the College of Social Science. "She is also a superstar scholar, who has received numerous awards and scholarships, including the prestigious Gates-Cambridge Scholarship."

HONORABLE
MENTION

**CHLOE
MAJZEL**

DEPARTMENT
OF ECONOMICS





DEAN'S DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION EXCELLENCE AWARD: FACULTY

SELECTION CRITERIA

This award recognizes a faculty member who plays a leadership role in advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion by demonstrating activities which may include serving underrepresented populations, developing or implementing innovative programs that enhance participation and opportunity, or enhancing the ability and effectiveness of the College to be an inclusive and welcoming environment.

DR. NAJIB HOURANI

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE GLOBAL URBAN STUDIES PROGRAM



Dr. Najib Hourani, an associate professor in the Department of Anthropology and the Global Urban Studies Program and core faculty in the Muslim Studies Program, is the winner of the inaugural 2021 College of Social Science Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Faculty Award. The award recognizes social science faculty who have made comprehensive, impressive and sustained efforts surrounding diversity, equity and inclusion.

Continuing a tradition of transformative research

Dr. Hourani joined MSU's faculty in the fall of 2006, and quickly established himself as a campus expert on the political anthropology of the Middle East, civil conflict, and cities of the Arab world. His past research focused on the Lebanese civil war and post-conflict urban reconstruction, and his current research builds upon the lessons learned in Beirut to address the rebirth of Syrian cities as that country's decade-long civil war comes to an end.

Unable to visit Syria due to U.S. travel restrictions, Dr. Hourani was recently awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to work with Syrian refugees in the neighboring country of Jordan to better understand their needs, hopes and aspirations for returning to their home villages, towns and cities.

Though his work in Jordan ended prematurely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Hourani is still finding ways to transform the human experience through his scholarship closer to home. Teaming up with faculty from Global Studies in Arts and Humanities in the College of Arts and Letters, Dr. Hourani is exploring new research on the relationship between African American and Arab American communities in the United States.

"The relationship between these two communities has historically been complicated, as there have been periods of both conflict and allyship between these groups in the past," Dr. Hourani explained.

Creating space for DEI conversations in the classroom

On top of his research, Dr. Hourani teaches several undergraduate and graduate-level Anthropology courses. Upon his arrival at MSU, he developed the Anthropology of the Middle East course, which, in addition to exploring the peoples and cultures of the region, begins with discussions of race and representation. "There are a lot of stereotypes and misconceptions about what it means to be Arab that many people carry with them that they may not even realize," explained Dr. Hourani.

In his classes, Dr. Hourani believes in fostering conversations about race and identity rather than shying away from them. For example, Dr. Hourani helps students to recognize harmful portrayals that normalize bigotry against Arab people in US popular culture, and encourages them to engage with such portrayals critically. One example he uses is Disney's 1991 animated film Aladdin. In the original version of the film, the opening song tells the children watching that the Arab world is a place, "Where they cut off your ear / If they don't like your face / It's barbaric, but hey, it's home."

Dr. Hourani emphasizes the incredible opportunity that Spartan students have to learn about Arab culture, heritage and history at MSU - especially from Arab American faculty.

"Many people may not realize that, outside of the Middle East, Michigan has the largest Arab population in the world," Dr. Hourani explained. "Arabs and Arab-Americans have made tremendous contributions to the state and to the country, and they face challenges that would be familiar to other ethnic groups in the US."

"In an increasingly diverse country, it is important for students to learn about Arab peoples and cultures. At the same time, it is important for Arab and Arab American students to learn about and understand the experiences of other groups as well," said Dr. Hourani. "Unlearning biases and stereotypes is hard work. I am gratified to see so many students willing to take it on at MSU."

Dr. Hourani reflects that throughout his teaching career, he has been impressed by the sincerity and the eagerness to learn that MSU students possess. "I love teaching MSU students. They are smart, engaged and sincere, and they want to learn. Even those that may come in with biases. They are willing and able to recognize and overcome them."

"Dr. Hourani is richly deserving of the inaugural DEI Faculty award because he has a demonstrated and sustained record of making our campus a safe, inclusive, and welcoming environment for all," said Dr. Nwando Achebe, the Associate Dean of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for the College of Social Science.

"After the presidential election of 2016 and the ensuing Muslim travel ban, for instance, he imagined and launched an "#EraseTheHate" session for Arab American and Muslim students on campus who were made to feel like they did not belong and were harassed and/or threatened," noted Dr. Achebe.

The College of Social Science is extremely proud to recognize and celebrate Dr. Hourani and his accomplishments.



FACULTY TEACHING INNOVATION AWARD: FIXED-TERM

SELECTION CRITERIA

This award recognizes a fixed-term faculty member for their innovation in undergraduate teaching and impact on student learning.

DR. EDDIE BOUCHER

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR
CENTER FOR INTEGRATIVE STUDIES



The world is always in a constant state of forward perpetuation: The earth's rotation, innovation in technology, slang and clothing, and in this case—education and teaching methods. Current higher-ed educators are in a constant battle. They must distill complex information in a way that is palatable to newer generations; find ways to engage students in meaningful ways outside of just receiving a grade; and creating an optimal learning environment in the “Zoom era” of teaching—in other words, it's a tall order for anyone. Eddie Boucher—Assistant Professor at Michigan State University—not only spearheaded this task, but has thrived as an educator in doing so, earning him the CSS Faculty Teaching Innovation Award: an award given to an educator who displayed an approach to innovative undergraduate teaching in a unit that has resulted in desired student learning outcomes.

One of, if not the most, innovative approaches to teaching can be found in Boucher's class, “Laugh your ISS Off”: A course which emphasizes the use of Netflix and comedy to explore issues of national diversity and social inequalities. As part of the undergraduate experience, MSU students are required to take a few Integrative Social Science (ISS) courses throughout their four years regardless of their major. Unlike most ISS courses, which operate in the typical lecture-based format, Boucher's class reinvents that entire process, creating a new roadmap in teaching. “I wanted to draw from everybody's obsession with streaming, whether it was Netflix or whatever, and also address Diversity Equity and Inclusion,” said Boucher. “It's innovative insofar as I'm meeting the students where they are [...] and it's somewhat ironic that when I would teach a large lecture section, students were on their laptops watching Netflix when I'm talking. I

was like, ‘Well let's flip the script for real and make Netflix the curriculum.’”

One of the caveats that follow innovation is pushback; people, as a whole, fear change, they fear former foundations being completely dismantled. For Boucher, in his first semester teaching, this came in the form of low Student Instructional Rating System (SIRS) reviews in which students voice their opinions about the course and professor. “Change happens very slow in a place like this,” said Boucher. “My first semester, my SIRS scores were not that high because I didn't know how to teach that many students yet—this was also the start of my innovative teaching.” During this period, students were opposed to these new methods of teaching, imploring Boucher to restructure the class in the empirical manner they were used to.

Despite the setback, Boucher wasn't deterred and was granted an unprecedented opportunity during unprecedented times. “Once COVID hit, I was able to play around and innovate,” said Boucher. During this period in which all classes were subject to an online format, Boucher was able to really shift the foundation of teaching, as the previous model was no longer suitable. As other teachers scrambled to adjust their methods of educating in an online setting, Boucher thrived and was able to create courses that weren't only congruent to new safety protocol, but met students where they were in terms of engagement.

For Boucher, this award was vindication—it meant his against-the-grain approach towards teaching can be effective. “The award is validation that I'm doing something right teaching, but it's also validation that students will step up to the plate and take on creative risks themselves,” said Boucher.



INTEGRATIVE STUDIES IN SOCIAL SCIENCE TEACHING EXCELLENCE AWARD

SELECTION CRITERIA

This award recognizes teaching excellence, dedication to student success, commitment to MSU undergraduate learning goals, and emphasis on international, multicultural, or national diversity in Integrative Studies in Social Science.

DR. ERIN GRAHAM

**ASSISTANT PROFESSOR
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND
CHICANO/LATINO STUDIES**



For some instructors, Integrative Studies in Social Science presents a challenge - how to not only teach a wide range of students with different interests and knowledge but also to engage them in the topic and with each other.

But for Dr. Erin Graham, ISS is the perfect subject for her style of teaching philosophy - to approach the students where they are and facilitate their learning from each other.

“In my classes, students feel empowered to deconstruct arguments and problematize traditional framings of issues and events,” she wrote. “All participants in the class construct knowledge by engaging in discourses that are grounded in disciplinary epistemologies. These discourses serve as meaning-making routines in which I scaffold students’ abilities to analyze and make sense of a variety of social science sources, arguments, and ideas using the academic language of social scientists. By engaging in these discourses, students understand that learning requires collegial and collaborative discursive interactions between everyone in the class.”

The College of Social Science Award Committee found Dr. Graham’s approach to be effective and engaging, and have awarded her the 2020-2021 Integrative Studies in Social Science Teaching Award.

“You have a rare ability to engage students from diverse disciplinary backgrounds and to move them toward impressively meeting learning outcomes through new, bold, and innovative approaches to teaching,” wrote Dr. Walter Hawthorne, Associate Dean of Academic and Student Affairs.

As an Assistant Professor of History and Core Faculty in Chicano/Latino Studies Program, Dr. Graham explores labor, migration, and gender in Latin America, with a specific focus on Mexico and the U.S.-Mexico borderlands.

But she knows her ISS students come from across the university from Hospitality to Supply Chain Management.

“It is rewarding to reach students who have never seen this content before,” she said.

To ensure the students learn not just from her but from each other, Dr. Graham focuses on facilitating dialogue and giving students a voice in the course. This hasn’t been as easy in a virtual classroom but she said she and her students have adjusted and are continuing to succeed.

“My goal is for students to leave the class with new ways of seeing, understanding, and interacting with the world around them,” she said.

In addition to her work at MSU, Dr. Graham is an Ingham County Commissioner (District 9) and former President of the East Lansing School Board.



FACULTY OUTREACH/ ENGAGEMENT AWARD

SELECTION CRITERIA

This award is given to a faculty member for their significant impact on the larger community through creative and innovative outreach or applied knowledge.

DR. JENNIFER CARRERA

**ASSISTANT PROFESSOR
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY**



MSU Sociology Assistant Professor Jennifer Carrera may be the recipient of the first College of Social Science Faculty Outreach and Engagement Award but the honor was earned by the entire Flint-based research team, she said.

“I am a guest in Flint. I have been invited to work on issues that are important to community members. This is a win for all of us. It is a recognition of the team, the partnerships and the work of the community itself,” Dr. Carrera said.

Dr. Carrera was selected to receive this award because she demonstrated a significant positive impact with her work on the larger community through innovation and creativity.

Dr. Carrera came to Michigan intending to work on water access issues in Detroit but early in 2015, she began getting requests to weigh in on the Flint water situation. But she didn’t feel like she knew enough about residents’ experiences to speak from a position of detached expertise.

“I wanted to go slowly and make myself available as needed. I was not going to impose on the community,” she remembered. “In order to understand the full picture, I knew I had to talk to the residents.”

She worked with community members and other invited academics to attempt to shift the focus of the story that was getting international coverage to emphasize the residents’ narrative. The group wanted to be able to share a common, community-based vision. In 2019, Dr. Carrera was the lead author on a community science paper entitled “Community Science as a Pathway for Resilience in Response to a Public Health Crisis in Flint, Michigan” that sets a frame for community-driven research. It was important to the team to center research around communities rather than academics.

The Flint-led research team organized focus groups of young people, African Americans, seniors, and Hispanic Flint residents.

“Dr. Carrera’s project empowers Flint residents first by validating their experiential knowledge and second by providing them opportunities to co-create knowledge about the very toxins and contaminants that may be affecting their life chances.” said MSU Sociology Chair Aaron McCright. “Dr. Jennifer Carrera is exceedingly worthy to receive this award because of the quality of her community-engaged research project in Flint, which is having transformative impacts in this community.”

Dr. Carrera joined MSU Sociology in 2014 after receiving her PhD in Sociology and an MS in Environmental Engineering at the University of Illinois-Urbana. She is jointly appointed with Sociology and the Environmental Science and Policy Program, and is affiliated with the Center for Gender in Global Context and Gender, Justice, and Environmental Change.



MATT HANSEN SUPPORT STAFF AWARD

SELECTION CRITERIA

This award recognizes support staff who demonstrate commitment to excellence and service to community as evident in their impact and professionalism, and by fostering positive culture/climate.

MELISSA CHRISTLE

GRADUATE SECRETARY SCHOOL OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE



Melissa Christle is the Graduate Secretary for the School of Criminal Justice at Michigan State University and the recipient of the 2021 College of Social Science Matt Hansen Support Staff Award.

Melissa first joined the School of Criminal Justice in 1999 and began serving as the Graduate Secretary for the School's Masters and Doctoral programs in 2001. The entirety of her time at MSU has been dedicated to the School of Criminal Justice and College of Social Science.

Melissa says that receiving this award means a tremendous amount and extends her sincerest and heartfelt thanks to College of Social Science, the School, and those who nominated her.

Melissa was nominated for the Matt Hansen Support Staff Award because of her commitment to the wellbeing and success of the Graduate Students in the School. Jennifer Paruk, a Graduate Student in the School of Criminal Justice who nominated Melissa for the award says "Melissa has left a positive mark on graduate students with her unwavering personal support and dedication to making SCJ a happier, kinder, and more welcoming place. We are so happy that the College of Social Science has recognized Melissa for all that she does for us students and the larger SCJ community."

"Melissa is the cornerstone of our graduate program community. She is the face of our School as we welcome new students to our graduate programs. She guides our faculty and administration in matters of University process as we develop our graduate program offerings and curricula. Melissa has become our go-to person when those in the School need help, because she is a problem solver. And without

fail, she lends a helping hand with grace and a smile on her face. She is simply the best," said Christopher Melde, Associate Director of the School of Criminal Justice, Director of Graduate Studies, and professor.

Melissa says her favorite part of the School of Criminal Justice is the camaraderie of the School among the faculty, staff, and students, and the support shown for one another across the board. She also genuinely enjoys learning about the various areas of Criminal Justice that the faculty and students are working in and studying. Melissa says, "to see how far reaching and interconnected all of these fields are, is incredible."

This award is in honor of Matt Hansen, who served as an Administrative Assistant in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies, and fully exemplified the desired qualities of award recipients--including commitment to excellence and service to community. While his life was cut short, Matt made a strong and unique impact on all who came in contact with him, and through his true professionalism, fostered a positive culture and climate throughout our College.



**WOMEN'S
LEADERSHIP
INSTITUTE
TOMLANOVICH
EQUITY
RESEARCH
AWARD**

SELECTION CRITERIA

This award is given to faculty and undergraduate student teams to conduct research that advances understanding of intersectionality and gender equity to realize the vision of the Women's Leadership Institute - to advance leadership equity for women globally.

DR. NAZITA LAJEVARDI WITH STUDENT JASMINE JORDAN & DR. CRISTINA BODEA AND DR. ANDREW KERNER WITH STUDENTS ZAC OZORMOOR AND LILLIAN MENG

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

Research teams Dr. Nazita Lajevardi and undergraduate student Jasmine Jordan, and Dr. Cristina Bodea and Dr. Andrew Kerner with undergraduate students Zac Ozormoor and Lillian Meng are the winners of the inaugural 2021 Women's Leadership Institute Tomlanovich Equity Research Fund.

Dr. Lajevardi, Dr. Bodea, and Dr. Kerner are all faculty in the Department of Political Science, and Jasmine, Zac and Lilian are majoring in the discipline as well. The teams' research will explore the disparities and discrimination that women face both politically and professionally, domestically and abroad.

Dr. Bodea and Dr. Kerner: Central banking and gender-based credibility

Dr. Bodea, Dr. Kerner, Zac, and Lilian's research will explore the absence of women in leadership roles in central banking in the United States, Europe and Japan. While in these countries, women often play an influential and visible role in politics and the behind-the-scenes of central banking, Dr. Bodea and her team believe it could have something to do with perceived credibility.

"A big part of being an effective central bank is convincing the market that you are committed to avoiding inflation and otherwise capable of managing the economy," explained Dr. Kerner.

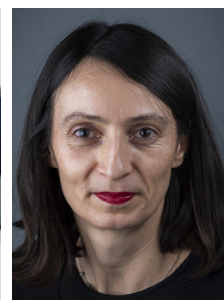
"Because central bankers typically cannot be fully monitored, generating credibility around that is often a matter of projecting that the central banker is the credible 'type.'"

"We suspect that this is a gendered concept, and one that under some circumstance makes it difficult for women to get appointed. So, our experiments are meant to find out, how biased are people against female central bankers?"

The team will be employing surveys throughout the U.S., Europe and Japan to gather the data needed to address this important question.



Dr. Nazita Lajevardi



Dr. Cristina Bodea



Dr. Andrew Kerner

Dr. Lajevardi: How relationships impact policy for women of color

Dr. Lajevardi and Jasmine's research will focus on whether or not contact with women of color impacts how Americans understand the intersectional discrimination that women of color face in social, political, and economic spaces. The study will look at two different kinds of contact - contextual, meaning passive relationships, and personal - to see which is more impactful.

"I am humbled to receive support from the Women's Leadership Initiative and the Tomlanovich Equity Research Fund to study how contact with women of color affects a number of outcomes alongside Jasmine Jordan, an incredibly brilliant and talented undergraduate star at MSU," said Dr. Lajevardi.

"As women of color, we have both been interested in researching contact theory and improving sociopolitical outcomes for marginalized communities. And the opportunity to work with such a brilliant student and in further improving our understanding along intersectional lines about issues that affect women of color is the greatest privilege I could ask for."

The team will be using multiple qualitative surveys to better understand how women of color fare in their workplaces, their day-to-day lives, and American democracy as a whole.

The WLI Tomlanovich Research Equity Fund grants \$5,000 to faculty teams and undergraduate students whose research builds upon the Women's Leadership Institute's vision to advance leadership equity for women globally. All social science faculty are eligible to apply, and selected researchers are given the opportunity to present their research to the WLI board, at the University Undergraduate Research and Arts Forum (UURAF), and at one academic conference of their choice.



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