

Jessica Persano

Pre-Doctoral Research Fellow
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EDUCATION

Stanford University Graduate School of Business
Non-matriculated graduate student as a Predoctoral Research Fellow

Jul 2025 – Present

University of California, Los Angeles
B.A. in Political Science (Honors), B.A. in Geography/Environmental Studies

Sept 2021 – Jun 2025

- GPA: 4.0 / 4.0
- Honors Thesis: *The Determinants of Policy Representation: Evaluating the Role of Policy Type in the U.S. States*

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Election administration, political representation, public policy, data science

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Predoctoral Research Fellow

July 2025 - Present
Stanford, CA

Stanford Graduate School of Business

- Support Professor Andrew Hall on multiple projects involving large-scale quantitative datasets related to American politics and political economy.

Research Assistant

Oct 2022 – Present
Los Angeles, CA

UCLA Department of Political Science

- Assist Professor Daniel Thompson on projects analyzing local election administration using large-scale quantitative data.
- Contributed to a published study in *PNAS* on private election funding and partisan outcomes.

Undergraduate Researcher

Mar 2024 – Jun 2025
Los Angeles, CA

UCLA Department of Political Science

- Designed and completed an honors thesis under Professor Julia Payson examining how policy type and political salience shape democratic responsiveness in U.S. states.

Research Assistant

Jun 2023 – Jun 2025
Los Angeles, CA

UCLA Fielding School of Public Health

- Collaborated with a public health research team on a project examining accessibility of post-assault resources and institutional responses to sexual violence at UCLA.

Undergraduate Researcher

Jun 2023 – Jun 2025
Los Angeles, CA

UCLA Fielding School of Public Health

- Led an independent qualitative study under Professor Jennifer Wagman investigating barriers to post-assault care for UCLA students with disabilities.

Research Intern

Jun 2024 – Dec 2024
Washington, D.C.

Center for American Progress

- Conducted rapid-response research and supported policy development across a range of progressive issue areas for the CAP Research Team.

RESEARCH OUTPUT

Completed Papers

From Office to Opportunity: Evaluating the Role of Descriptive Representation on Candidate Emergence in U.S. Swing States

Mar 2025 – Jun 2025

UCLA PS170A final paper; joint with Jolie Anderson and Xuanting Fan. ([GitHub Repository](#))

The Determinants of Policy Representation: Evaluating the Role of Policy Type in the U.S. States Mar 2024 – Apr 2025
 Solo-authored senior honors thesis, UCLA Political Science Department. ([GitHub Repository](#))

Working Papers

Do Claude Code and Codex P-Hack? Sycophancy and Statistical Analysis in Large Language Models Feb 2026 - Present

Joint with Samuel G.Z. Asher, Janet Malzahn, Elliot J. Paschal, Andrew C. W. Myers, and Andrew B. Hall. ([GitHub Repository](#))

Police Chief Performance and Turnover

Mar 2024 – Present

Joint with Daniel M. Thompson

Works in Progress

Exploring Sexual Assault Experiences and Access to Resources Among UCLA Students with Disabilities Jun 2024 – Present

Solo-authored independent research project

Survivors' Experiences with and Recommendations for Improving Responses to Sexual Violence at UCLA Jun 2023 – Present

Joint with Jennifer Wagman, Taylor Thomas, Natalie Saham, Wafa Khan, Georgia Lavery Van Parijs, and Julianne Lempert

OTHER PROJECTS

From Personnel to Policy: Project 2025 Is President Donald Trump's Agenda Aug 2024
 Published [article](#) with Ryan Koronowski and Thomas Musgrave, Center for American Progress

PRESENTATIONS

Professional Conference Presentations

Are Police Leaders Held Accountable for Performance? Nov 2025
 Justice and Injustice Mini-Conference, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Cambridge, MA)

Seminars & Workshops

Investing in Political Expertise: The Remarkable Scale of Corporate Policy Teams Nov 2025
 Paper presented at Stanford GSB RF Program Weekly Workshop (Stanford, CA)

From Office to Opportunity: Evaluating the Role of Descriptive Representation on Candidate Emergence in U.S. Swing States Jun 2025
 Poster presented at UCLA PS170A Poster Day (Los Angeles, CA)

The Determinants of Policy Representation: Evaluating the Role of Policy Type in the U.S. States May 2025
 Paper presented at UCLA Undergraduate Research Week (Los Angeles, CA)

Exploring Sexual Assault Experiences and Access to Resources Among UCLA Students with Disabilities May 2024
 Paper presented at UCLA Undergraduate Research Week (Los Angeles, CA)

SELECTED COURSEWORK

Course Title	University	Level	Grade
American Electorate in the Trump Era	Stanford	Graduate	TBD
Introduction to Probability Theory	Stanford	Undergraduate	TBD
Political Parties and Interest Groups	UCLA	Undergraduate	A
National Institutions: Congress	UCLA	Undergraduate	A+
Electoral Politics: Public Opinion & Voting Behavior	UCLA	Undergraduate	A
National Institutions: The Presidency	UCLA	Undergraduate	A+
Honors Research in Political Science	UCLA	Undergraduate	A+
Research Design Seminar for Honors Thesis	UCLA	Undergraduate	A+

Studies in Statistical Analysis of Political Data	UCLA	Undergraduate	A
Intermediate Geographic Information Systems	UCLA	Undergraduate	A
Introduction to Remote Sensing	UCLA	Undergraduate	A

AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

Stanford GSB Research Fellowship Awarded by the Stanford Graduate School of Business to predoctoral fellows conducting full-time research under faculty mentorship	Jul 2025
Blackman Family Award Awarded by UCLA Department of Geography to the top 10 graduating seniors based on major GPA	Jun 2025
Departmental Highest Honors Awarded by UCLA Political Science Department for completing a senior honors thesis with an A+ and GPA of at least 3.95	Jun 2025
Distinguished Undergraduate Scholar Award Awarded by UCLA Political Science Department to three students with the most outstanding honors theses	Jun 2025
Summa Cum Laude Conferred by the UCLA College of Letters and Science to students graduating in the top 5% of their class (GPA of 3.994 or higher)	Jun 2025
Keck Humanistic Inquiry Undergraduate Research Award Awarded by UCLA Undergraduate Research Center; \$10,000 to support faculty-mentored honors thesis in political science	Sept 2024
UCLA Political Science Departmental Honors Program Selected by UCLA Political Science Department as one of 12 students to complete a faculty-mentored senior honors thesis	Apr 2024
Undergraduate Research Scholars Program Scholarship Awarded by UCLA Undergraduate Research Center; \$6,000 to support yearlong independent research under faculty mentorship	Sept 2023
Dean's Honors List Awarded by UCLA to students earning a GPA of 3.915+ with 12 graded units; received all eligible quarters	2021 - 2025

LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE

Peer Mentor <i>UCLA Political Science Undergraduate Council</i>	Mar 2025 – Present Los Angeles, CA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide individualized academic and professional guidance to a first-year political science student, offering mentorship on course planning, research opportunities, and campus involvement. 	
Co-Director <i>SWC Planned Parenthood Chapter at UCLA</i>	Sept 2024 – Jun 2025 Los Angeles, CA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Led a 50+ member reproductive justice organization by coordinating volunteer onboarding, facilitating biweekly meetings and educational programming, and managing leadership transitions in collaboration with Planned Parenthood Los Angeles. 	
President <i>IGNITE at UCLA</i>	Mar 2024 – Jun 2025 Los Angeles, CA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oversaw weekly meetings for 90+ members, led a UC-wide advocacy campaign for sexual assault forensic exam access, and coordinated statewide partnerships and media outreach to advance reproductive justice policy goals. 	
Membership Director <i>Westside Young Democrats</i>	Jun 2023 – Jun 2025 Los Angeles, CA

- Maintained membership records for 100+ members, managed communications and renewals via ActBlue and Google Sheets, and increased engagement through strategic email outreach and event coordination.

SKILLS

- **Programming & Statistical Analysis:** R, Stata, Python, SQL
- **Data Tools & Platforms:** Redivis, Qualtrics, Git/GitHub, L^TE_X
- **Geospatial Analysis:** QGIS, ArcGIS Pro, ENVI
- **Research & Communication:** Quantitative and qualitative research, regression analysis, survey data analysis, literature reviews, academic writing, policy research, public speaking, project management, IRB applications

PROFESSIONAL REFERENCES

Professor Andrew Hall

Davies Family Professor of Political Economy, Stanford Graduate School of Business; Senior Fellow, Hoover Institution; Senior Fellow, Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research; Professor of Political Science (by courtesy), Stanford University
E-mail: andyhall@stanford.edu

Scholar Profiles: [Personal Page](#) — [Google Scholar](#)

Professor Daniel Thompson

Assistant Professor of Political Science, University of California, Los Angeles

E-mail: dthompson@polisci.ucla.edu

Scholar Profiles: [Personal Page](#) — [Google Scholar](#)

Professor Julia Payson

Assistant Professor of Political Science, University of California, Los Angeles

E-mail: jpayson@ucla.edu

Scholar Profiles: [Personal Page](#) — [Google Scholar](#)

Professor Jennifer Wagman

Associate Professor of Community Health Sciences, University of California, Los Angeles Fielding School of Public Health

E-mail: jennwagman@ucla.edu

Scholar Profiles: [Lab Website](#) — [Google Scholar](#)