

Jessica Persano

Pre-Doctoral Research Fellow
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EDUCATION

Stanford University Graduate School of Business Jul 2025 – Present
Non-matriculated student as a Predoctoral Research Fellow

University of California, Los Angeles Sept 2021 – Jun 2025
B.A. in Political Science (Honors), B.A. in Geography/Environmental Studies

- 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 Graduate School of Business Stanford, CA

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

Research Assistant Oct 2022 – Present
UCLA Department of Political Science Los Angeles, CA

- 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
UCLA Department of Political Science Los Angeles, CA

- 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
UCLA Fielding School of Public Health Los Angeles, CA

- 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
UCLA Fielding School of Public Health Los Angeles, CA

- 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
Center for American Progress Washington, D.C.

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

PROJECTS

Police Chief Performance and Turnover Mar 2024 – Present
Working paper with Daniel Thompson

From Office to Opportunity: Evaluating the Role of Descriptive Representation on Candidate Emergence in U.S. Swing States Mar 2025 – Jun 2025

Co-authored class final paper with Jolie Anderson and Xuanting Fan (UCLA PS170A)

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 ([GitHub Repository](#))

Survivors' Experiences with and Recommendations for Improving Responses to Sexual Violence at UCLA Jun 2023 – Jun 2025
Working paper with Jennifer Wagman, Georgia Lavery Van Parijs, and Julianne Lempert

Exploring Sexual Assault Experiences and Access to Resources Among UCLA Students with Disabilities Jun 2023 – Jun 2025
Working solo-authored independent research project

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

PRESENTATIONS

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

Stanford GSB Research Fellowship Jul 2025
Awarded by the Stanford Graduate School of Business to predoctoral fellows conducting full-time research under faculty mentorship

Blackman Family Award Jun 2025
Awarded by UCLA Department of Geography to the top 10 graduating seniors based on major GPA

Departmental Highest Honors Jun 2025
Awarded by UCLA Political Science Department for completing a senior honors thesis with an A+ and GPA of at least 3.95

Distinguished Undergraduate Scholar Award Jun 2025
Awarded by UCLA Political Science Department to three students with the most outstanding departmental honors theses; received third place

Summa Cum Laude Jun 2025

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)

Keck Humanistic Inquiry Undergraduate Research Award

Sept 2024

Awarded by UCLA Undergraduate Research Center; \$10,000 to support faculty-mentored honors thesis in political science

UCLA Political Science Departmental Honors Program

Apr 2024

Selected by UCLA Political Science Department as one of 12 students to complete a faculty-mentored senior honors thesis

Undergraduate Research Scholars Program Scholarship

Sept 2023

Awarded by UCLA Undergraduate Research Center; \$6,000 to support yearlong independent research under faculty mentorship

Dean's Honors List

2021 - 2025

Awarded by UCLA to students earning a GPA of 3.915+ with 12 graded units; received all eligible quarters

LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE

Peer Mentor

Mar 2025 – Present

UCLA Political Science Undergraduate Council

Los Angeles, CA

- 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

Sept 2024 – Jun 2025

SWC Planned Parenthood Chapter at UCLA

Los Angeles, CA

- 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

Mar 2024 – Jun 2025

IGNITE at UCLA

Los Angeles, CA

- 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

Jun 2023 – Jun 2025

Westside Young Democrats

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, \LaTeX
- **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 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](#)