

MARTHA WILFAHRT

Charles and Louise Travers Department of
Political Science
210 Social Sciences Building
Berkeley, CA 94720

martha.wilfahrt@berkeley.edu
martha-wilfahrt.github.io

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

University of California, Berkeley
Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, July 2018-

Northwestern University
Visiting Assistant Professor, Dept. of Political Science, 2017-18
Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow, Dept. of Political Science, 2015-17

EDUCATION

PhD, Government, Cornell University 2015

MA, Political Science, Indiana University- Bloomington 2008

BA, Geography & Political Science (with distinction), University of Wisconsin-Madison 2005

PUBLICATIONS

Book

2021. *Precolonial Legacies in Postcolonial Politics: Representation and Redistribution in Rural Africa*. Cambridge University Press (Cambridge Series in Comparative Politics)
- Allan Sharlin Memorial Book Award, Social Science History Association (2022)
 - QMMR Sartori Best Book Award, Honorable Mention, 2022
 - Long-Listed for the Luebbert Best Book Award, 2022

Peer-Reviewed Articles

Forthcoming. A Precolonial Paradox: Rethinking Political Centralization and its Legacies. *American Political Science Review*.

2025. Understanding the Sensitivity of Party Identification Questions in Polarized African Contexts (with Justine Davis). *Political Behavior*.

2023. "Judge, Landlord, Broker, Watchman: Assessing Variation in Chiefly Duties in the Ghana-Togo Borderlands" (with Natalie Letsa) *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 61(3), pp. 439-462.

2023. "Enumerator Experiences in Survey Data Collection in Sub-Saharan Africa" (with Justine Davis). *Comparative Political Studies* 57(4), pp. 675-709.

* Winner, African Politics Conference Group Best Paper Award

2023. “Demanding Recognition: Citizen Perspectives on Clientelism in Africa” (with Jeffrey Paller & Kathleen Klaus) *African Affairs* 122/487, pp. 185-203.
2022. Citizen Response to Local Service Provision: Emerging Democratic Accountability in Decentralized West Africa? *Electoral Studies* 79.
2021. Improving Open-Source Information on African Politics, One Student at a Time (with Kristin Michelitch) *PS: Politics and Society*.
2020. The Mechanisms of Direct and Indirect Rule: Colonialism and Economic Development in Africa (with Natalie Letsa) *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 15(4), pp. 539-577.
2018. Precolonial Legacies and the Contemporary Politics of Public Goods Provision in Decentralized West Africa. *World Politics* 70(2), pp. 239-74.
2018. The Politics of Local Government Performance: Elite Cohesion and Cross-Village Constraints in Decentralized Senegal. *World Development* 103, pp. 149-61.
- * Winner, African Politics Conference Group Best Graduate Student Paper Award
2018. Popular Support for Democracy in Autocratic Regimes: A Micro-Level Analysis of Preferences (with Natalie Letsa). *Comparative Politics* 50(2).

WORKING PAPERS

- Unspoken Hierarchies: The Enduring Effects of Caste Discrimination in Africa (with Leonardo Arriola and Dominika Koter) (*conditionally accepted at Perspectives in Politics*)
- Colonial Legacies, Collective Efficacy, and Rural Development: Evidence from the Togo-Ghana Border (with Natalie Letsa) (*revise & resubmit*)
- The Political Effects of Caste in Senegal (with Leonardo Arriola and Dominika Koter)
- Guns, Garrisons, and Growth: Revisiting State Formation in Africa (with Leonardo Arriola, Igor Kolesnikov & Yosef Tadesse)

IN PROGRESS

- Endogenous (Re)Districting? The Politics of Subnational Boundary Creation
- Indigenous Slavery and Long-Run Inequality in Africa
- The Origins of Opposition Strongholds (with Natalie Letsa)
- Book Project*: Tropical Subjects: Ethnographies of Experimentation

OTHER WRITING

2022. [Studying Precolonial Legacies in the Present: Insights from Fieldwork](#). *Broadstreet Blog*.

FELLOWSHIPS & AWARDS

African Politics Conference Group Best Paper Award, 2024
Society of Hellman Fellows, Research Grant, 2023-24
Kellogg Fellowship, University of Notre Dame, 2023-24 (declined)
Allan Sharlin Memorial Book Award, Social Science History Association (2022)
Honorable Mention, Giovanni Sartori Best Book Award, Qualitative and Multi-Method Research Section (2022)
Undergraduate Research Assistance Program Grant, Northwestern University AY 2016-17
Janice N. and Milton J. Esman Best Dissertation Prize, Cornell University 2016
African Politics Conference Group Best Graduate Student Paper 2014-15
Seed Grant, Center for the Study of Inequality, Cornell University, Fall 2014
Sage Completion Fellowship, Cornell University, 2014-15
Boren Fellow (Senegal), 2012-13
Cornell Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Travel Grant (Senegal), Fall 2012
APSA Africa Workshop Fellow, University of Botswana, Gaborone, Botswana, July 2012
Houston I. Flournoy Graduate Fellowship, Cornell University, Summer 2012
Einaudi Center International Research Travel Grant 2010 (Niger), 2011 (Mali)
Russell Sage Fellowship, Cornell University, 2008-09
FLAS (Bambara), Indiana University, 2007-08; 2008-09 (declined)

PRESENTATIONS & INVITED TALKS

LSE, African Political Economy Seminar (scheduled 2026)
Princeton University, Comparative Politics Series (scheduled 2025)
Cornell University, Politics, Markets, and Governance in Africa (2025)
University of Minnesota, Comparative Speaker Series (2024)
Michigan State University, Eye on Africa Series (2023)
MIT, Department of Political Science (2023)
University of Oklahoma, African Studies Institute (2022)
American Political Science Association (2013-2023, 2025)
International Studies Association (2019)
Midwest Political Science Association (2014-2018, 2023)
African Studies Association (2013-2023)
Governance and Local Development Annual Conference, University of Gothenburg, 2018
MGAPE, Northwestern University, December 2017
Northwestern, Post-Intervention Governance & Security in the African Sahel, 2017
Northwestern, Comparative Historical Social Sciences, April 2017
Northwestern, Program on African Studies, May 2016

TEACHING

African Politics (Undergraduate, Graduate)
African Politics through Literature and Film (Undergraduate)
Political Economy of the Global South (Undergraduate)
The Politics of International Aid (Undergraduate)
The Politics of Social Welfare (Undergraduate)
Major Themes in Comparative Politics (200A) (Graduate)
Research and Writing (290) (Graduate)

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

UC-Berkeley

Faculty Search Committee (2023); Graduate admissions (2023-24, 2022-23, 2021-22, 2019-20, 2018-19); Comparative Politics Colloquium convener (2022-23); Faculty Co-Organizer, Historical Social Science Workshop (2019-2021); Graduate studies committee (2022), Department citation committee (2019); Field exam committee member (Comparative politics: 2023 (2x), 2019; African politics 2019); IIS Simpson Research Grant Award Committee Member (2023, 2020); Regents and Chancellor's Fellowship Interviewer (2023-24); Philo Sherman Bennett Prize Committee (2023-25); Florence Mason Palmer Prize Judge (2025); Center for African Studies FLAS committee (2022, 2020)

Discipline

American Political Science Association: QMMR Committee Member-at-large (2024-26), QMMR Best Book Award Committee (2023), QMMR Best Article Award Committee (2021), Co-organizer, Research and Development Group African Politics Conference Group, APSA (2020), APCG Finishing-Up Grant Award Committee (2020), APCG Best Book Award Committee (2017)

Midwest Political Science Association: African Politics Section Chair (2023)

Western Political Science Association: Co-organizer, Non-Democratic Politics Mini-Workshop (2023)

Social Science History Association: Sharlin Best Book Award Committee (2023)

Graduate Applications International Network (GAIN): mentor (2020-21)

Reviewer: African Affairs, American Journal of Political Science, American Political Science Review, British Journal of Political Science, Cambridge University Press, Comparative Politics, Comparative Political Studies, Governance, Journal of Development Studies, Journal of Institutional Economics, Journal of Politics, International Journal of Comparative Sociology, International Studies Quarterly, Perspectives on Politics, Political Behavior, Social Policy and Administration, Theory and Society, World

Politics, World Development

Book Manuscript Workshop discussant: Dominika Koter, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, April 2023; Noah Nathan, *The Scarce State*, April 2021; Peer Schouten, *Roadblock Politics*, November 2019

ADVISING

Graduate

In-Progress

Jane Mango Angar (Dissertation Co-Chair)

Sarah Daniel (Dissertation Co-Chair, First year advisor)

Rachel Fisher (Dissertation Committee Member)

Joseph Greenbaum (Dissertation Chair, Second year advisor, First year advisor)

Dinah Lawan (Dissertation Committee Member, Third year advisor)

Britt Leake (Dissertation Committee Member)

Yosef Tadesse (Dissertation Committee Member)

Andrew Wojtanik (Dissertation Committee Member, Second year advisor)

Completed

Daniel Balke (Dissertation Committee Member), PhD 2023

Catlan Reardon (Dissertation Committee Member), PhD 2022

Undergraduate

Adena Ajike (Honors Thesis Advisor), 2022-23

Himani Someshwar (Honors Thesis Advisor), 2022-23

Montserrat Diaz (McNair Program Advisor), 2022

Fawziyah LaGuide (McNair Program Advisor), 2022

Vi Li (Honors Thesis Advisor), 2021-22

Nicole Khoury (Honors Thesis Advisor), 2020-21

Rebecca Gerny (Honors Thesis Advisor), 2019-20

Alex Torrez (Honors Thesis Advisor), 2019-20

RELATED SKILLS & TRAINING

Languages: French (Professional Proficiency), Dutch (elementary)

ICPSR, University of Michigan, 2014

Institute for Qualitative and Multi-Method Research, 2011