

# Meet the 2021 First Generation Scholar Travel and Accessibility Grant Recipients

JASMINE SCOTT | AMERICAN POLITICAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION

The APSA Committee on the Status of First Generation Scholars in the Profession works to bring focused attention to the ways in which class, economic inequality, and mobility can effect political scientists' ability to thrive educationally and professionally throughout their careers. In November 2021, the Committee matched donations to the APSA Annual Fund to support the professional development of first generation scholars in the political science discipline. Learn more about the recipients of this year's travel and accessibility grant below.

## MUHAMMAD HASSAN BIN AFZAL



Muhammad Hassan Bin Afzal (he/him/his) is a doctoral candidate in Kent State University's political science department. His research focuses on global health crises and how they affect both public health and social policies. Hassan's dissertation conducts an empirical analysis to assess

the connection between policy entrepreneurs' role, climate change, and the shifting nature of immigration policies during global health crises.

## JIHYEON BAE



Jihyeon Bae is a doctoral student in the Department of Political Science at the University of Washington, Seattle. Her research focuses on intergovernmental institutions led by non-democratic state leaders. Her previous work on authoritarian international law has been funded by the

UW Human Rights Center.

## GONG CHEN



Gong Chen is a PhD candidate in the department of political science at Georgia State University. His research interests are international political economy and political psychology, with a focus on public opinion, social identity, and intergroup relations. Gong's dissertation attempts to explore the causal mechanisms where

parasocial intercultural contact brings about favorable

opinions of foreign countries and to examine the psychological microfoundations of constructivism in international relations. His recent work "Utilitarianism or Cosmopolitanism? A Study of Education's Impact on Individual Attitudes toward Foreign Countries" will be forthcoming at *International Interactions*. Based on international trade theory and social identity theory, this study finds that education's positive association with outgroup attitudes is explained by an internationalist, cosmopolitan worldview rather than material gains from transnational economic ties.

Moreover, Gong is a research fellow in the Second Century Initiative Chinese Studies Cluster. He cooperates with fellow researchers in investigating a number of socio-political issues in contemporary China, such as corruption, factional politics, censorship and propaganda, state-society relations, and foreign policy. Gong is very thankful for the support of the First Generation Scholar Accessibility Grant in helping him present his working paper and network with fellow scholars in the 2021 APSA Annual Meeting.

## AMINU DRAMANI



Aminu Dramani is a PhD candidate in Peace and Conflict studies in the Sociology and Social Work Department at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi. Aminu earned his MPhil in Political Science from the University of Ghana. He was born and raised

in Accra, Ghana. Aminu was the first in his family to earn an MPhil degree. His vision is to become an internationally acclaimed conflict scholar. Before he commenced the PhD, Aminu had been teaching at the Kwame Nkrumah University. He is not only more than grateful to the APSA Committee on the Status of First Generation Scholars for selecting him as a grantee but also for investing in other students who are passionate about bringing positive impact to their respective communities.

**SYEDA SHAHBANO IJAZ**

Syeda ShahBano Ijaz is a PhD candidate at the University of California, San Diego and is a 2021-2022 UC Institute of Global Conflict and Cooperation Dissertation Fellow. She studies the politics of last-mile access to foreign aid with a specific focus on Pakistan. She presented findings

from two survey experiments conducted in Pakistan at 2021 APSA Annual Meeting & Exhibition. As part of a TLC Workshop on Organizing Virtual Junior Scholar Workshops, she shared her experience in engendering diversity in academic panels. Her work in improving diversity in the academy has been recognized by the Yale-Bouquet Graduate Honor Society and she was selected as a Bouquet Scholar for 2021.

**JAE-EUN KIM**

Jae-Eun Kim is a PhD candidate in political science at the University of Rochester. Jae's broad research interests are in the fields of American politics and political methodology. Substantively, she is interested in how political attitudes and behaviors are formed in the context of immigration, race and ethnicity, and identity politics. She also

has special interests in survey methodology, causal inference, and public opinion as a means of approaching her research questions. Her dissertation work examines how immigrant attitudes are formed and shaped in the context of inclusion and exclusion. Jae is deeply grateful for the APSA First Generation Scholar Accessibility Grant that helped her to attend her first in-person APSA conference.

**SHIRLEY LE PENNE**

Shirley Le Penne is a PhD student in government at Cornell University, specializing in political theory. A granddaughter of Algerian Jewish immigrants to France, Shirley's commitment to the Maghreb entwines with her interest in life amidst incarceration to inform her dissertation project.

Tapping into the lived experiences of confinement, Shirley studies the politics of life, death, and suicide in prison and prison-like environments, as well as the spectrum of life and death sentences. In her dissertation, she comparatively examines the intergenerational incarceration of Algerians in French prisons and of Palestinians in Israeli prisons.

Shirley is the first of her family to complete middle school, attend high school, receive a Baccalauréat, go to college, pursue a master's degree, and undertake a PhD.

She completed her BA in the History of the Middle East and Africa at Tel Aviv University. She wrote her master's thesis on hope and despair in Algeria and Tunisia amidst the Arab Spring at Tel Aviv University and Sciences Po Paris. Shirley is thankful for the generous support of the First Generation Scholar Travel and Accessibility Grant which helped her attend the 2021 APSA Annual Meeting in Seattle and participate in the 2021 Lightning Rounds.

**CHIRASREE MUKHERJEE**

Chirasree Mukherjee is a doctoral candidate at the School of Politics and Global Studies at Arizona State University. She specializes in International Relations and Comparative Politics. Her dissertation grapples with intractable conflicts, especially those fought on religious

grounds. She explores the variations within religious conflicts, especially among different religious causes and their effects on conflict intractability. Relying on both qualitative and quantitative analysis, she concentrates on conflicts between Hinduism and Islam in India to understand how the deep-seated religious cleavage between Hindus and Muslims germinate violence, resulting in intractable conflicts.

Apart from her primary research interest in Religion and Conflict, she is also interested in International Terrorism, Democratization and Foreign Policy. She is the first woman in her family to pursue a doctoral degree and to travel overseas for higher education in United States. The First Generation Scholars Travel and Accessibility Grant has helped her participate as a first-time attendee at the 2021 APSA Annual Meeting and Exhibition.

**SALIH NOOR**

Salih Noor is a PhD candidate in the department of political science at Northwestern University. His research interests lie in comparative democratization, colonialism and postcolonial development, and qualitative methods, with a substantive focus on Africa. In his dissertation

project—The Legacies of Liberation: Critical Junctures, Reform Approaches, and Path-Dependent Political Change in Southern Africa— he examines the historical causes of contrasting contemporary political legacies of violent, mass-mobilizing, and ideologically-driven liberation struggles, during the second half of the twentieth century, against racially oppressive and exclusionary settler-colonial regimes in Southern Africa.

Salih has received several research grants and fellowships including the Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Fellowship, SSRC Dissertation Proposal Development Fellowship, and grants from the Buffett Institute for Global Studies, The Graduate School, and the

Program of African Studies at Northwestern University. The First Generation Scholars Travel and Accessibility Grant, for which he is very thankful, allowed him to present at the 2021 APSA Annual Meeting a chapter of his dissertation in poster form as well as a separate paper exploring the long-run effects of Italian colonialism on state development, national integration, and democracy in Eastern and North Africa.

### ORÇUN SELÇUK

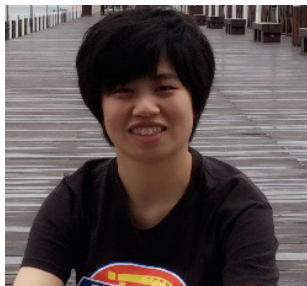


Orçun Selçuk is an assistant professor of political science at Luther College. Before coming to the United States, he received undergraduate and master's degrees from Boğaziçi University in Istanbul. Selçuk completed his PhD at Florida International University, becoming the first person in his family to study

and teach at the university level outside of Turkey. During his doctoral studies, Selçuk developed a strong interest in polarizing populist leaders around the world, particularly in Turkey and Latin America, and wrote a dissertation on Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Turkey, Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, and Rafael Correa in Ecuador.

Currently, he is working on turning his dissertation into a book manuscript, tentatively titled "Polarizing Populism in Turkey, Venezuela, and Ecuador: Inclusion, Exclusion, and Opposition." While working on the dissertation and the book project, Selçuk also published multiple articles and chapters on populism, personalism, authoritarianism, democratic backsliding, and opposition parties. He has attended the annual APSA conferences since 2016 and benefited from constructive feedback as well as networking opportunities. He appreciates the selection committee's broad definition of First Generation Scholar that includes scholars with an international background.

### QINGYAN WANG



Qingyan Wang is a PhD candidate in the School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Georgia. Her research interests are media politics and civic engagement. Her dissertation will try to understand how state-sponsored propaganda campaigns influence

public opinion in authoritarian contexts. Qingyan sincerely appreciates that the APSA First Generation Travel and Accessibility Grant has supported her attendance at the 2021

Annual APSA meeting.

### JASMINE NOELLE YARISH



Jasmine Noelle Yarish is an assistant professor of political science at the University of the District of Columbia. Yarish's expertise is in the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and democratic theory. Her research aims to extend the idea of abolition democracy theorized by W.E.B. Du Bois

to include political and intellectual contributions made by black women during the era of Reconstruction in the mid to late nineteenth century. Her archival commitments to revisiting that early period of contemporary political thought, the primary democratization period in American political development, and the unique case of Philadelphia in rethinking the significance of Reconstruction for the discipline of political science place Noelle Yarish's scholarship prominently in the growing literature on the "Third Reconstruction."

### IRMAK YAZICI



Irmak Yazici is a doctoral candidate and lecturer in political science at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. Her research broadly focuses on secularism within the context of comparative and global politics. Her dissertation entitled "Seeing through Secularism: A Comparative Approach to Religious Controversy in India and Turkey" provides a comparative historical analysis of secularism in India and Turkey throughout an investigation of the links between religious controversy and nationalist discourse. More specifically, her dissertation outlines how secular law and policies have controlled speech in the public sphere and discusses the ways in which such control has facilitated the emergence of populist religious nationalism in similar ways in both contexts. She has taught a broad range of courses at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa since 2014, including courses on the politics of the media, global environmental politics, American politics, and global/comparative politics. She is also the coordinator for the Center for South Asian Studies at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. Irmak is a Fulbright scholarship recipient and holds Master's degrees in political science, Asian studies, and philosophy. ■

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