

Zachary C. Courser, Ph.D.

Claremont McKenna College
500 East Ninth St.
Claremont, CA 91711

zcourser@cmc.edu
(909) 607-6724 office
(617) 901-8787 cell

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

Claremont McKenna College, Department of Government
Associate Professor of the Practice, 2023-present
Visiting Assistant Professor, 2014-23

Sciences Po Lyon, Diplôme d'établissement sur les États-Unis (DELUSA)
Enseignant (Lecturer), 2013-14

Claremont McKenna College, Department of Government
Interim Director, Washington Program
Visiting Assistant Professor, 2010-11

Boston College, Department of Political Science
Jack Miller Center Postdoctoral Fellow
Visiting Assistant Professor, 2009-10

Washington and Lee University, The Williams School of Commerce, Economics, and Politics
Department of Politics
Visiting Assistant Professor, 2008-09

Claremont McKenna College, Department of Government
Visiting Instructor, 2006-08

RESEARCH AND ADMINISTRATIVE APPOINTMENTS

Claremont McKenna College
Co-Founder and Co-Director, Policy Lab, 2016-present
Research Director, Dreier Roundtable, 2014-19

Bipartisan Policy Center, Washington, DC
Democracy Project Fellow, 2022-present

Legatum Institute, London, UK
Senior Programme Director and Fellow, 2012-13
Executive Director, Commission on Wellbeing Policy, 2013

EDUCATION

University of Virginia
Ph.D., Government, 2008
M.A., Government, 2003

Claremont McKenna College
B.A., Government, 1999

PUBLICATIONS

Books

Empowering the Purse: How Earmarks Help Congress Do Its Job. Oxford University Press, forthcoming 2027.

Parchment Barriers: Political Polarization and the Limits of Constitutional Order. Co-edited with Eric Helland and Kenneth P. Miller. University Press of Kansas, 2018.

Book Chapters

“Integrating Large Language Models into Text-as-Data Research: Methods, Workflows, and Standards for Social Science.” In *The Oxford Handbook on AI and the Future of Social Welfare: Recent Developments and Future Prospects*, edited by Pablo Álvarez, Antonio López Peláez, Gloria Kirwan, Francisco Javier García-Castilla, and Ángel De-Juanas-Oliva. Oxford University Press, forthcoming 2027.

“Parties against the Constitution.” In *Parchment Barriers: Political Polarization and the Limits of Constitutional Order*, edited by Zachary Courser, Eric Helland, and Kenneth P. Miller. University Press of Kansas, 2018.

“Introduction.” With Kenneth P. Miller. In *Parchment Barriers: Political Polarization and the Limits of Constitutional Order*, edited by Zachary Courser, Eric Helland, and Kenneth P. Miller. University Press of Kansas, 2018.

“Losing Faith in Elites: The Roots of Protest in the Occupy and the Tea Party movements.” In *Get in the Booth 2012*, edited by Larry Sabato. Pearson/Longman, 2012.

Journal Articles

“Protest Without a Party: The Tea Party as a Conservative Social Movement.” *Society* 49(1): 43–53, 2012.

“The Tea Party at the Election.” *The Forum* 8(4), Article 5, 2010.

Policy Reports

“Power Restored: Congressionally Directed Spending in the 117th Congress and Recommendations for Improvement.” With Michael Thorning and Franz Wuerfmannsdobler. Bipartisan Policy Center, February 2023.

“Understanding Access and Turnout in the 2020 Election.” CMC Policy Lab Research Brief, June 2022.

“Restoring the Power of the Purse: Earmarks and Re-Empowering Legislators to Deliver Local Benefits.” With Kevin Kosar. American Enterprise Institute, February 2021.

“Wal-Mart and the Politics of American Retail.” Competitive Enterprise Institute, November 2005.

Other Scholarly Publications

“Christopher F. Zurn, *Splitsville U.S.A: A Democratic Argument for Breaking Up the United States.*” Book review. *The Review of Politics* 86(4), 2024.

“Political Parties,” “Ballot Initiatives,” “Term Limits,” “Independent Expenditure,” “Precinct Committee Person,” and “Soft Money.” In *The Encyclopedia of American Parties and Elections*, edited by Larry J. Sabato and Howard R. Ernst. Facts on File, 2006.

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

Book Project

Congressional Information and Policymaking in the Age of AI. Examines how Congress acquires, processes, and uses policy information as artificial intelligence changes the informational environment of legislative institutions.

Working Paper

“The Impact of Statewide Vote-by-Mail on Partisan and Minority Participation in Elections.” With Eric Helland. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4697323.

Ongoing Research Projects

Low-Propensity Voters and the 2020 Election. Analysis of how emergency changes to voting access affected participation among infrequent voters, and the implications for state policy.

Pilot Programs and Congressional Policymaking. Analysis of pilot programs in congressional legislation as a means for promoting evidence-based policymaking, conducted in collaboration with the Bipartisan Policy Center.

Artificial Intelligence, Information, and Governance. Developing an interdisciplinary research agenda examining how large language models (LLM) will reshape policy research, public-sector information processing, and institutional decision-making, building on ongoing work applying LLM research methods in social science.

GRANTS AND SPONSORED RESEARCH

William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. Policy Lab, Claremont McKenna College. \$750,000, 2019-25. Co-developed proposal and secured program funding with Eric Helland. Supported the Policy Lab program and faculty research, including sabbatical and research support for *Empowering the Purse: How Earmarks Help Congress Do Its Job* (Oxford University Press, forthcoming 2027).

William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. Dreier Roundtable, Montpelier Project, Claremont McKenna College. \$250,000, 2015-18. Co-developed proposal and secured program funding with Eric Helland and Kenneth P. Miller. Supported research and conference activities culminating in *Parchment Barriers: Political Polarization and the Limits of Constitutional Order* (University Press of Kansas, 2018).

TEACHING AND ADVISING

Courses Taught

American Political Institutions

American Conservatism, Sciences Po Lyon, 2014.

U.S. Congress, Sciences Po Lyon, 2013, Boston College, 2010.

American Legal History, Johns Hopkins University, Center for Talented Youth, 2004-05.

Political Behavior & Representation

American Political Parties & Interest Groups, Claremont McKenna College, Boston College, Washington & Lee University, University of Virginia, 2003-11.

Campaigns and Elections, Claremont McKenna College, Boston College, Washington & Lee University, University of Virginia, 2005-10.

Introduction to American Politics, Claremont McKenna College, Washington & Lee University, 2006-17.

Public Policy

Policy Lab, Claremont McKenna College, 2016-present.

External-partner research practicum and capstone for the public policy major, co-taught with economist Eric Helland, in which students conduct supervised empirical policy research, and produce reports and recommendations for a diversity of governmental, research, and policy organizations. Research projects and external partners:

- 2026: Analyzing ICE enforcement on courthouse grounds, **Los Angeles County Superior Court**.
- 2025-26: Evaluating congressional pilot programs as evidence-based policy making, **Bipartisan Policy Center**.
- 2025: Policy proposals for closing the access to justice gap in state laws, **Los Angeles County Superior Court**.
- 2024: Access to justice policy reforms in civil litigation: domestic violence restraining orders and debt collection, **RAND Corporation**.
- 2023-24: Evaluating reforms to debt collection practices in court administration and state law, **RAND Corporation**.
- 2022: Analyzing FY2023 Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS), **Bipartisan Policy Center**.
- 2021-22: Examining the effects of changing vote access on turnout in the 2020 election, **American Enterprise Institute**.
- 2020-21: Comparing state-level disrupted elections policies, **American Enterprise Institute**.
- 2019-20: Reinstating congressional earmarking, **American Enterprise Institute**.

- 2019: Developing a 50-state Medicaid scorecard of primary care coverage, **Bipartisan Policy Center**.
- 2019: Review of global city migration and refugee initiatives, **Office of Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti**.
- 2018: The role of global cities in the *UN Global Compact on Refugees*, **Brookings Institution**.
- 2018: State and federal regulatory environment for telehealth services, **Bipartisan Policy Center**.
- 2017: State Medicaid support for respite care, **Bipartisan Policy Center**.
- 2016-17: Improving care for high-need, high-cost Medicare patients, **Bipartisan Policy Center**.

Undergraduate Research Supervision

Undergraduate Summer Research Fellows Program, Claremont McKenna College, 2020-present. Direct an annual 8-week summer fellowship program, supervising a team of undergraduates working on my academic research. Fellows receive structured training in data science, policy analysis, and applied political research, and contribute to advancing my research agenda.

- 2026: LLM identification and categorization of authorizing language for pilot programs in congressional legislation.
- 2025: Using High-Performance Computing (HPC) to assess changes to state-level voting access laws using nationwide voter administrative data, including training with the University of Southern California Center for Advanced Research Computing to use the Laguna HPC cluster.
- 2024: Content analysis of earmarking journalism using a retrieval-augmented generation (RAG) pipeline.
- 2023: Classifying earmarking journalism with dictionary methods.
- 2022: Evaluating county-level turnout and access to voting in the 2020 federal elections.
- 2021: Evaluating state election emergency laws and disrupted elections during COVID.
- 2020: Creating survey instruments and interviewing former Members of Congress regarding their career experience with earmarking.

Research Assistant Supervision, Claremont McKenna College, 2022–present.

Supervise teams of undergraduate research assistants during the academic year on scholarly research projects, meeting weekly to review progress and evaluate research tasks. Responsibilities include training students in data collection and cleaning in R, LLM-assisted natural language processing, data coding and classification, literature review, and preparation of research write-ups to professional policy and scholarly standards. RA teams have contributed to research on congressional earmarking, voting access, pilot programs in congressional legislation, and AI-assisted text-as-data analysis.

Selected Senior Thesis Supervision

Clare A’Hearn, “Blame it on *Buckley*: the hydraulics of campaign finance & democratic decay,” Pomona College, 2026 – Committee Member.

Sophia Shalz, “A legal, political, and empirical analysis on the exclusion of student IDs as voter identification,” Scripps College, 2026 – Committee Member.

Benjamin Smith, “Copyrights and wrongs: evaluating copyright law's adaptability to generative AI,” Claremont McKenna College, 2024 – Primary Advisor.

Jordan Hoogsteden, “More than four walls and a roof: exploring the subnational implementation of the human right to adequate housing through state constitutions and courts,” Pomona College, 2023 – Committee Member.

Samuel Horowitz, “Towards a resilient future: federal policies for adapting the U.S. coasts to climate change,” Pitzer College, 2021 – Committee Member.

Kyle Fendorf, “A rush toward outrage: how mass media have played a role in political polarization,” Claremont McKenna College, 2021 – Primary Advisor.

Faculty Advisor, Washington Program, Claremont McKenna College, 2014–present.

PRESENTATIONS

Conference Papers

“Integrating Large Language Models into Text-as-Data Research: Methods, Workflows, and Standards for Social Science,” AI and the Future of Social Welfare: Recent Developments and Future Prospects, London School of Economics, June 4-5, 2026.

“Assessing Turnout Effects of Statewide Vote-By-Mail Through Measuring the Treatment on the Treated,” Election Science, Research, and Administration (ESRA) Conference, University of Southern California, May 16-17, 2024.

“The Impact of Statewide Vote-by-Mail on Partisan and Minority Participation in Elections,” Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management fall conference, Washington, DC, November 18, 2022.

“Parties Against the Constitution,” Political Polarization and the Administrative State, C. Boyden Gray Center for the Study of the Administrative State,” George Mason University Law School, March 29, 2019.

“Nature and Origins of Populism in the U.S. and France: Fears and Hopes for Liberal Democracy,” Democratic Discontent: How Populism and Nationalism are Reshaping Politics in Europe and America, Dreier Roundtable, Claremont McKenna College, January 4-7. 2018.

“Political Parties Against the Constitution,” Montpelier Conference: Examining the Roots of Polarization in Our Constitutional Order, Orange, Virginia, April 2, 2016.

“America’s Political Religion: The Role of the Constitution in Conservative Campaign Politics,” L’Association Française d’Etudes Américaines annual conference, La Rochelle, France, May 30, 2015.

“The Tea ‘Party’ as a Conservative Social Movement,” Workshop on the Future of Social Conservatism, Henry Salvatori Center, Claremont McKenna College, Claremont, CA, May 20-21, 2011.

“Mugwumps and Goo-Goos: American Democracy and 19th Century Anti-Partisanship,” Midwestern Political Science Association annual conference, Chicago, IL, 2007.

“Do Parties Make for a Better Democracy? A Comparative Analysis of Party Organization in the States,” Midwestern Political Science Association annual conference, Chicago, IL, 2005.

“Partisanship and Participation: A Theory of Political Parties in a Democracy,” Midwestern Political Science Association annual conference, Chicago, IL, 2004.

“Soft in the Center: Party Politics in the Era of the Independent Voter,” Western Political Science Association annual conference, Portland, OR, 2004.

Invited Academic Presentations

“Populism and The Challenge to Liberal Democracy in the Atlantic Alliance,” Henry Salvatori Center, Claremont McKenna College, St-Paul de Vence, France, June 24-27, 2024. Roundtable participant.

“The Evolution of Earmarking in the U.S. Congress,” Agora Institute, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD, September 13, 2022.

“Polarization and the Madisonian System,” *Political Polarization and the Administrative State: Government Institutions in Turbulent Political Times*, Claremont McKenna College & George Mason University Center for the Study of the Administrative State, Washington, DC, March 29, 2019.

“Sufficient Virtue For Self-Government: the Constitution and the Limits of Democracy,” Center for Liberal Arts and Free Institutions, University of California, Los Angeles, October 12, 2017.

“Trump, Populism, and Discontent,” *Les Primaires aux États-Unis : en un Combat (Politique) Douteux*, Sciences Po Lyon, Lyon, France, February 4, 2016. Panelist.

“The Use of Subjective Wellbeing as a Tool for Public Policy,” *Subjective Wellbeing: Its Measurement and Use in Public Policy and Decision-Making in Mexico and Latin American*, Latin American Social Science Institute (FLACSO) Mexico, Mexico City, Mexico, April 17-18, 2013. Panelist.

“Roundtable on the 2012 Republican Presidential Nomination,” Sciences Po Lyon (Institut d’Etudes Politiques de Lyon), Lyon, France, December 8, 2011. Roundtable participant.

Policy and Public Presentations

“Analyzing Fiscal Year 2023 Directed Spending,” at *Power of the Purse: Restoring Congress's Directed Spending Authority*, Bipartisan Policy Center, Washington, DC, December 12, 2022.

“Reforming Congress,” Sunwater Institute, Bethesda, MD, June 21, 2022.

“Analyzing Fiscal Year 2022 Earmarking,” *Reforming and Restructuring Earmarks: What is the Path Forward?*, CMC Policy Lab, American Enterprise Institute, Bipartisan Policy Center, Washington, DC, December 13, 2021.

“Does Congress still control the power of the purse?” Center for Social, Cultural, and Constitutional Studies, American Enterprise Institute, March 25, 2021. Panelist.

“The future modernization of Congress,” Center for Social, Cultural, and Constitutional Studies, American Enterprise Institute, January 29, 2021. Moderator.

“Congress and Constitutional Reform,” Center for Social, Cultural, and Constitutional Studies, American Enterprise Institute, October 16, 2020. Moderator.

“Democracy and the Politics of Prosperity: The Tea Party's Revolt Against Inequality of Opportunity,” Legatum Institute; London, UK, October 14, 2011.

CONFERENCE AND SYMPOSIUM ORGANIZATION

“Divisions in the western liberal consensus,” CMC Policy Lab & Henry Salvatori Center, St-Paul-de-Vence, France, June 26-29, 2023. Co-organizer and roundtable participant.

“Power of the purse: restoring Congress's directed spending authority,” Bipartisan Policy Center, Washington, DC, December 12, 2022. Co-organizer and panelist.

“Reforming and restructuring earmarks: what is the path forward?” CMC Policy Lab, American Enterprise Institute, Bipartisan Policy Center, Washington, DC, December 13, 2021. Co-organizer.

“Democratic discontent: how populism and nationalism are reshaping politics in Europe and America,” Dreier Roundtable, Claremont McKenna College, January 4-7, 2018. Organizer and presenter.

“Democratic discontent: how populism and nationalism are reshaping politics in Europe and America,” Dreier Roundtable, St-Paul-de-Vence, France, June 12-15, 2017. Organizer and presenter.

“Montpelier conference: examining the roots of polarization in our constitutional order,” James Madison’s Montpelier, Orange, Virginia, April 1-3, 2016. Organizer and presenter.

“Examining the roots of polarization in our constitutional order,” Dreier Roundtable, Claremont McKenna College, Claremont, CA, October 9-11, 2015. Organizer and presenter.

“Bridging the immigration divide: forging a bipartisan policy on visas for STEM graduates,” Dreier Roundtable & Brookings Institution, Washington, DC, March 26, 2015. Organizer and moderator.

“Immigration policy for the 21st century,” Dreier Roundtable & Brookings Institution, Claremont, CA, November 7, 2014. Organizer.

“Symposium on Ethics for a More Prosperous World,” with H.H. the Dalai Lama, Legatum Institute, London, UK, October 23, 2012. Organizer and roundtable participant.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE AND AFFILIATIONS

Member, Southern California AI for Research & Education (SoCal AIRE), 2026-present
Institutional Representative, Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, 2022-24
Manuscript reviewer, *Politique Américaine*, 2016-18
Manuscript reviewer, *Political Science Quarterly*, 2009-16

Professional Memberships: American Political Science Association; Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management.

CIVIC AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Politics Contributor, NPR Affiliate KPCC, Pasadena, CA, 2017-22
Founding President, board member, Housing Claremont, 2019-21
Board member, Pilgrim Place, 2019-23
Board member, Claremont Heritage, 2017-20
Chair, Traffic & Transportation Commission, City of Claremont, 2018-19; Commissioner 2015-19

LANGUAGES

French: French B1 level, Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), Test de connaissance du français (TCF), October 2024; Université Lumière Lyon 2, Centre International d'Études Françaises, Lyon, France, diplôme universitaire d'études françaises, A2 level (CEFR), March 2012

German: Passed doctoral foreign-language requirement, University of Virginia, May 2008