

SERENA LAWS

Department of Political Science
Trinity College
300 Summit Street
Hartford, CT 06106
slaws@trincoll.edu

ACADEMIC POSITIONS

Senior Lecturer, Department of Political Science, Trinity College, Hartford, CT
(2019-present)

- Courses Taught: American National Government, Political Science Research Methods, American Welfare State, Social Inequality in the United States, Debt and American Citizenship, Community Action Gateway, Tax Policy and Inequality in Hartford, COVID-19 and the American State

Visiting Assistant Professor and Visiting Lecturer, Department of Political Science, Trinity College, Hartford, CT (2013-2019)

Visiting Scholar, Department of Political Science, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD (2011-2013)

Postdoctoral Fellow, Rockefeller Center for Public Policy, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH (2009-2011)

- Managed the *Policy Research Shop*, supervising undergraduates doing non-partisan policy research for New Hampshire and Vermont legislators
- Taught courses in the Public Policy Minor

EDUCATION

Ph.D., University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, Political Science (2011)

M.A., University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, Political Science (2007)

B.A., Amherst College, Women's and Gender Studies, *Magna Cum Laude* (2001)

PUBLICATIONS AND MANUSCRIPTS

- Serena Laws, “The Free-Market Family: How the Market Crushed the American Dream (and How It Can Be Restored). By Maxine Eichner.” Book Review for *Perspectives on Politics* 18(4), December 2020.
- Serena Laws, “What Kind of Relief? Consumer Bankruptcy and the American Safety Net” *New Political Science* 42(3), September 2020.
 - This article is an examination of the institution of consumer bankruptcy as site for debt relief, drawing on interviews and a survey with the street-level bureaucrats of the consumer bankruptcy system.
- Serena Laws, with Michael Sanchez and Rick D’Amato “The Justice Gap: Legal Needs of New Hampshire’s Low-Income Residents” *Policy Research Shop* (2012).
- Robin Datta, Serena Laws, Steven Williams, Russell Mayer. 2008 APSA Teaching and Learning Conference Track Summaries, Track Nine: Civic Engagement II. [*PS: Political Science & Politics*](#) (July 2008).
- Sean Boutin, David Brodsky, Serena Laws, Russ Mayer, Maria Rost Rublee. 2007 APSA Teaching and Learning Conference Track Summaries, Track Five: Assessment I. [*PS: Political Science & Politics*](#) 40(3): 575-588.

ARTICLES IN PROGRESS:

- “Catch-All and Last Resort: Consumer Bankruptcy’s Place in the American Welfare State” (under review, submitted July 2022).
 - This paper argues that consumer bankruptcy is an integral part of the American welfare state that should be included and studied alongside the other major federal programs available to Americans in financial need.
- (with Mallory SoRelle) “Learning to Forgive: Deservingness and the Politics of Student Debt Relief” (submitted August 2022)
 - This paper employs an original conjoint survey experiment to explore the role that “deservingness” plays in people’s opinions about student debt forgiveness.
- “Policy Feedback and Tax Credits: Rethinking Invisibility in the Submerged State”
 - This paper explores the potential policy feedback effects of tax credits such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) on low-income Americans based on fieldwork at a free tax clinic.

- “Scraping for Assets: The Effects of Chapter 7 Trustee Discretion in an Era of Declining Bankruptcy Filings”
 - This article draws on data from an original, national survey to examine problematic aspects of the way Chapter 7 is administered, with an emphasis on the pivotal role of the trustee.
- “What Do Debtors Deserve? The Social Construction of Debtors in American Bankruptcy Reform”
 - This paper systematically analyzes the political discourse around debtors and indebtedness that emerged during the congressional debate over the 2005 Bankruptcy Abuse Prevention and Consumer Protection Act (BAPCPA).
- “Debt and American Citizenship”
 - Drawing on Judith Shklar's theory of citizenship as standing, this article considers the historical relationship between personal debt and American citizenship, from indentured servitude and sharecropping to modern forms of debt and the credit score, arguing that debt and citizen standing have been intertwined throughout American history, with negative associations in the past, and a combination of negative and positive associations in the present.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- (with Mallory SoRelle) “Who Deserves Student Loan Forgiveness?” Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, IL, April 2022 (hybrid).
- “COVID-19 and the New Safety Net: Shifting Political Terrain for Federal Debt Relief.” Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association in Seattle, September 2021 (Virtual).
- “Effects of Low Income Tax Credits: Rethinking Invisibility in the Submerged State” Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Western Political Science Association, April 2021 (Virtual).
- “Catch-all and Last Resort: Consumer Bankruptcy’s Place in the American Welfare State.” Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Western Political Science Association, April, 2020 (Virtual).
- “What Do Debtors Deserve? The Social Construction of Debtors in American Bankruptcy Reform.” Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association in Washington, DC, September, 2019.
- “Policy Feedback and Tax Credits: Rethinking Invisibility in the Submerged State.” Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Western Political Science Association, San Diego, CA, April, 2019.

- “Racialized Debt Relief: Assessing Street-Level Behavior and Race in the Consumer Bankruptcy System.” Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association in San Francisco, CA, September, 2017 and the Annual Meeting of the Western Political Science Association, Vancouver, BC, April, 2017.
- “Profit from Administration: Examining Bankruptcy’s Street-Level Bureaucrats.” Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association Philadelphia, PA, September 2016.
- “The Effects of the Profit Motive Among Bankruptcy’s Street-Level Bureaucrats.” Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, IL, April 2016.
- “Debt and American Citizenship.” Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, IL, April 2016.
- “The New American Welfare State: Consumer Bankruptcy as Case Study.” Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association in San Francisco, CA, September, 2015.
- “Citizen Repayers: Representations of Debt Since the Great Recession.” Presented at the Western Political Science Association Meeting in Seattle, WA, April, 2014.
- “Private Bureaucrats: Representative Bureaucracy in the Consumer Bankruptcy System.” Presented at Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, IL, April 2014.
- “Bankruptcy as Welfare: Bankruptcy’s Place in the American Social Safety Net.” Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association in Seattle, WA, September, 2011.
- “Political Effects of Debt and Bankruptcy Filing.” Presented at the Western Political Science Association Meeting in San Antonio, TX, April, 2011.
- “Bankruptcy Stigma and its Political Effects: The Social Construction of Debtors in Bankruptcy Policy.” Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Northeastern Political Science Association, Boston, MA, November, 2010.
- “Bankruptcy Reform in a Neoliberal Social Policy Context.” Presented at Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, IL, April 2010.
- “Access to Bankruptcy, Access to Justice: Legal Access as a Factor in Consumer Bankruptcy Filing Rates.” Presented at Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, IL, April 2009.

- “The Strange Career of Poverty Rights in the United States.” Presented at the Joint Annual Meeting of the Law and Society Association and the Canadian Law and Society Association, Montreal, Canada, May, 2008.
- “Legal Aid, Medicaid, and Differential Citizenship in the Federal Welfare State.” Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, IL, April 2008.
- “Poverty Rights in the States: Court interventions in Health Care and Education” (co-author Elizabeth Beaumont). Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Western Political Science Association, San Diego, CA, March 2008.
- “Knowledge as Citizen Engagement: Using Current Events in Introductory Political Science Courses,” (co-author Jennifer Rutledge). Presented at the APSA Teaching and Learning Conference, San Jose, CA, February, 2008.

COMMUNITY LEARNING EXPERIENCE

- Director, Trinity College VITA Tax Clinic at Trinfo Café (Spring 2019-present)
 - IRS-Certified Site Coordinator of Trinity’s Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) clinic
 - Developed “Experiential Certificate” program to expand and deepen the program into a multi-semester student experience with academic, research, and community learning components
- Community Learning Research Fellows, Faculty Advisor (Fall 2018)
- Community Engagement Working Group (Spring 2018)
- Liberal Arts Action Lab, Faculty Advisor (Spring 2018)
- Liberal Arts Action Lab Advisory Committee (Spring 2017)
- Courses with Community Learning Components, Trinity College
 - POLS 310 (formerly CLIC 290), *Tax Policy and Inequality in Hartford* (Spring 2019, Spring 2020)
 - CACT 101, *Community Action Gateway* (Fall 2017, Fall 2018)
 - POLS 242, *Political Science Research Methods* (Spring 2016, Spring 2017, Fall 2017, Spring 2019)
 - POLS 348 (later POLS 222), *Social Inequality in the United States* (Fall 2013; Fall 2014; Fall 2016)
 - POLS 241, *Empirical Political Methods & Data Analysis* (Fall 2013; Fall 2014; Fall 2015)

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

- American Political Science Association
 - Public Policy Section
 - Class and Inequality Section

FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

- Faculty Research Grant Faculty Research Grant, Trinity College, Hartford, CT. 2022-2023 Academic Year (\$1,260 for survey research expenses).
- Digital Scholarship Fellow, Trinity College, 2018-2019 Academic Year
- Student Research Program Fellowship, Trinity College, Summer 2018 (\$3,500 for Research Assistant)
- Center for Teaching and Learning Fellow, Trinity College, 2017-2018 Academic Year.
- Community Learning Initiative Course Development Grant, Summer 2017 (\$1,000)
- Faculty Research Grant, Trinity College, Hartford, CT. 2016-2017 Academic Year (\$2,535 for research-related travel expenses)
- Student Research Program Fellowship, Trinity College 2016-2017 Academic Year (\$3,500 for Research Assistant)
- TIIS Junior Faculty Fellowship, Fall and Spring, 2015 (\$150 per semester)
- Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship, University of Minnesota (2008-2009)
- Thesis Research Grant, University of Minnesota (2008)
- Horowitz Foundation for Social Policy Grant (2007)
- Graduate Research Partnership Program Grant, with Prof. Elizabeth Beaumont (2007)
- Political Science Summer Fellowship (2007)
- Ueland Fellowship (2006)
- Amherst College Graduate Fellowship (2003-2006)
- Vernie Wolfsberg Foundation Fellowship (2004, 2005)
- National Merit Scholarship (1997)

METHODOLOGICAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Organizer of “Debt, Credit, and American Politics” virtual workshop (Fall 2020-present)
 - This virtual colloquium brings together prominent political scientists from across the country working on the politics of personal debt and credit in the United States.
- “Methods Studio” Short Course participant, Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Philadelphia, PA, September 2016.
- Short Course on DA-RT Standards and Implementation, Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association in San Francisco, CA, September, 2015.
- “Categorical Data Analysis: Models for Binary, Ordinal, Nominal, and Count Outcomes.” Short Course with J. Scott Long at the *Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR)*. Ann Arbor, MI, June 2009 (1 week)
- *Law and Society Graduate Student Workshop*, Montreal, Canada, May, 2008 (2 days)
- *Preparing Future Faculty Certificate*, University of Minnesota (2 semester course sequence; completed December, 2007)

- *Institute for Qualitative and Multi-Method Research*, Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ, January, 2007 (2 weeks)
- Graduate Courses in Research Methods, University of Minnesota (2003-2006)
 - Qualitative Research Methods (Political Science)
 - Intermediate Social Statistics (Sociology)
 - Advanced Social Statistics (Sociology)

COMMITTEE WORK AND INSTITUTIONAL SERVICE

Library & Information Technology Committee, Trinity College, Hartford, CT (Spring 2021-present)

Task Force on the Status of Women at Trinity, Trinity College, Hartford, CT (Fall 2019-present)

Advising Coordinator, Graduate Program in Public Policy, Trinity College, Hartford, CT (Spring 2018-Spring 2020)

Community Engagement Working Group, Trinity College, Hartford, CT (Spring 2018)

Liberal Arts Action Lab Advisory Committee, Trinity College, Hartford, CT (Spring 2017)

Social Sciences Policy and Review Council, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities:

- *Graduate Student Representative*, Course Proposals Committee, 2006-2007

Department of Political Science, University of Minnesota, Twin Cities:

- *Graduate Student Representative* (elected), Graduate Work Committee, 2005-2007
 - Worked with faculty on policies relevant to political science graduate students.
- *Committee Chair*, Teaching Committee, 2006-2007
 - Organized workshops around pedagogical issues for graduate students.
- *Committee Chair*, Ph.D. Support Committee, 2005-2006
 - Organized professional development workshops for graduate students.

REFERENCES

STEFANIE CHAMBERS
Professor of Political Science
Trinity College
Hartford, CT 06106
PHONE: (860) 297-5293
EMAIL: stefanie.chambers@trincoll.edu

JACK DOUGHERTY
Professor of Educational Studies
Trinity College
Hartford, CT 06106
PHONE: (860) 297-2296
EMAIL: john.dougherty@trincoll.edu

JOE SOSS
Professor and Cowles Chair for the Study of
Public Service
Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs
University of Minnesota
PHONE: (612) 626-9865
EMAIL: jbsoss@umn.edu

DARA STROLOVITCH
Associate Professor of Gender and Sexuality
Studies
303 Robertson Hall
Princeton University
PHONE: (609) 258-8990
EMAIL: dzs@princeton.edu