

SERENA LAWS

Public Policy & Law
Trinity College
300 Summit Street
Hartford, CT 06106
slaws@trincoll.edu

ACADEMIC POSITIONS

Assistant Professor, Public Policy & Law, Trinity College, Hartford, CT (2023-present)

Senior Lecturer, Political Science, Trinity College, Hartford, CT (2019-2023)

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

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

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

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

PEER-REVIEWED ARTICLES

- [“Deservingness and the Politics of Student Debt Relief.”](#) 2023. *Perspectives on Politics*, FirstView. (With Mallory SoRelle).
- [“The Political Benefits of Student Loan Debt Relief.”](#) 2023. *Research & Politics* 10(2): 1-8. (With Mallory SoRelle).

- “What Kind of Relief? Consumer Bankruptcy and the American Safety Net.” 2020. *New Political Science* 42(3): 333-56.

IN PROGRESS:

- “Catch-All and Last Resort: Consumer Bankruptcy’s Place in the American Welfare State” (under review at *Law & Social Inquiry*, submitted December 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.
- “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.

BOOK REVIEWS, MEDIA, REPORTS, AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS

- Testimony to Committee on Finance, Revenue, and Bonding, Connecticut General Assembly (regarding SB 771: An Act Establishing a Refundable Child Tax Credit). February 27, 2023.
- [Testimony](#) to Committee on Finance, Revenue, and Bonding, Connecticut General Assembly, December 12, 2022.
- [“Four things to know about Biden’s student-debt relief plan.”](#) *Monkey Cage blog, Washington Post*. September 2, 2022 (with Mallory SoRelle).
- “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): 1221-3. December 2020.
- “The Justice Gap: Legal Needs of New Hampshire’s Low-Income Residents” *Policy Research Shop*, 2012 (with Michael Sanchez and Rick D’Amato).
- “APSA Teaching and Learning Conference Track Summaries, Track Nine: Civic Engagement II,” with Robin Datta, Steven Williams, and Russell Mayer. *PS: Political Science & Politics* 41(3): 623-624, July 2008.
- “APSA Teaching and Learning Conference Track Summaries, Track Five: Assessment I,” with Sean Boutin, David Brodsky, Russ Mayer, and Maria Rost Rublee. 2007 *PS: Political Science & Politics* 40(3): 575-588, July 2007.

WORKING PAPERS:

- “Policy Feedback and Tax Credits: Rethinking Invisibility in the Submerged State”
 - This paper explores the mechanisms of policy feedback for refundable tax credits such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) on low-income Americans based on interviews and fieldwork at a free tax clinic.
- “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).

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- “Race and the Emerging Politics of Personal Debt Relief.” (with Mallory SoRelle) Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association Los Angeles, CA, September 1, 2023.
- “Preaching to the Choir or Expanding the Base?: The Politics of Student Loan Debt Relief.” (with Mallory SoRelle) Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association Montreal, Canada, September 18, 2022.
- “Who Deserves Student Loan Forgiveness?” (with Mallory SoRelle) 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.

COURSES TAUGHT

Trinity College, Public Policy & Law (2023-present)

- PBPL 201 Introduction to American Public Policy
- PBPL 220 Research and Evaluation

Trinity College Political Science (2013-2022)

- POLS 102 American National Government
- POLS 207 COVID-19 and the American State
- POLS 222/348 Social Inequality in the United States*
- POLS 241/242 Political Science Research Methods*
- POLS 310 Tax Policy and Inequality in Hartford*
- POLS 345 Debt and American Citizenship
- POLS 372 American Welfare State
- CACT 101 Community Action Gateway*

**courses with community learning component*

Dartmouth College, Rockefeller Center for Public Policy

- PBPL 28 Law and Public Policy (*Spring 2011*)
- PBPL 82.7/GOVT 83.7 Consumer Debt, Bankruptcy and Economic Policy (*Spring 2010*)

St. Olaf College

- Political Science 272, Constitutional Law (*Spring 2007, Spring 2008*)

Macalester College

- Political Science 294, Law and Public Policy (*Fall 2007*)

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY LEARNING EXPERIENCE

- Member, CT Nonprofit Child Tax Rebate Coalition (Fall 2022-present)
 - Working with Greater Hartford non-profit groups to advocate for a permanent CT Child Tax Rebate
- Director, Trinity College VITA Tax Clinic at Trinfo Café (Spring 2019-present)
- 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)

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

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

FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

- Stephen Balcanoff Award, Southside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance (SINA) (2023)
 - In recognition of service as director of the Trinity VITA Tax Clinic at Trinfo Cafe
- Faculty Research Grant, Trinity College (2022-2023)
- Digital Scholarship Fellow, Trinity College (2018-2019)
- Student Research Program Fellowship, Trinity College (Summer 2018)
- Center for Teaching and Learning Fellow, Trinity College (2017-2018)
- Community Learning Initiative Course Development Grant (Summer 2017)
- Faculty Research Grant, Trinity College (2016-2017)
- Student Research Program Fellowship, Trinity College (2016-2017)
- TIIS Junior Faculty Fellowship, Trinity College (Fall and Spring, 2015)
- 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 TRAINING 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

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

Affiliated Faculty Member, Public Policy Graduate Program, Trinity College, Hartford, CT (Fall 2020-present)

Library & Information Technology Committee, Trinity College, Hartford, CT (Spring 2021-Spring 2023)

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)

REFERENCES

ABIGAIL WILLIAMSON
 Associate Professor of Political Science and
 Public Policy and Law
 Trinity College
 Hartford, CT 06106
 PHONE: (860) 297-2571
 EMAIL: Abigail.Williamson@trincoll.edu

MALLORY SORELLE
 Assistant Professor
 Sanford School of Public Policy
 Duke University
 210 Sanford Building
 Box 90245
 Durham, NC 27708
 mallory.sorelle@duke.edu

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
Professor of Women's, Gender, and
Sexuality Studies, American Studies, and
Political Science
115 Prospect Street
Rosenkranz Hall
New Haven, CT 06520
PHONE: (203) 432-5230
EMAIL: dara.strolovitch@yale.edu