

# *Public Policy Bulletin*



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**Jason Nichols**

## *Policy Management*

Nichols, who holds an M.A. in American Studies from Northeastern State University, enters the program as a policy management scholar with experience in government, politics, and teaching in higher education. His research interests include the electoral process, campaign finance, voting laws, and voter behavior.

When asked why he selected the PUBP program at the U of A, Nichols responded that there was a “nearly perfect alignment of interest, need, cost, and reputation of the program” that led to his decision. He added that “I came very close to attending the University of Arkansas as a 19-year-old freshman in 1994. But, in a last-minute decision, I took advantage of the fact that there is a university in the town where I lived and decided to ‘stay home’ and attend

there. While I don’t regret that choice at all, I can’t help but feel as if I’m being given the chance to explore a road not taken. That piece of my personal history adds to my excitement and increases my eagerness to get started...!”

*There was a “nearly perfect alignment of interest, need, cost, and reputation of the program.”*



**Brooke Anderson**

## *Agriculture Policy*

Anderson joins the program after relocating to NWA last summer to work at the Center for Arkansas Farms and Food (CAFF) at the U of A.

Building on her previous graduate education in Agricultural Economics and Rural Development, she will specialize in agriculture policy aiming to “better discover and implement the most impactful policies for... individuals and their local food systems.”

Her research areas include food security and community food system development from a programmatic perspective. Specifically, she seeks to explore how policy drives the creation and support of programs that focus on food security through the development of local food systems.

Anderson’s future career goals involve working “within the international development field through the creation and management of sustainable programs aimed toward increasing food security and developing local, community-driven, food systems.”



**Braxton Bragg**

## *Social Justice Policy*

Bragg currently works for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in the Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity as an Equal Opportunity Specialist.

Having earned an M.A. in Philosophy from the U of A, he was drawn to the PUPB program because it allows him to transfer his “background and skills learned through philosophy to the public sphere.”

Bragg will specialize in social justice policy and will pursue research that centers on criminal policy and other policy “that actively or passively increases recidivism,” a wide-reaching area that covers housing, education, policing, and more. In the future, he plans to return to Washington, DC as a policy analyst “to spend a decade or so working on Capitol Hill and after ... [he] might consider teaching at a university.”

*He was drawn to the PUPB program because it allows him to transfer his “background and skills learned through philosophy to the public sphere.”*



**AG Holdier**

### *Social Justice Policy*

Already a doctoral student in philosophy at the U of A, Holdier enters the PUPB program with a concentration

in social justice policy with the goal of applying his “philosophical interests towards tangible real-world benefits within the context of public policy.”

Concerned with social and political epistemology and the philosophy of language, he will explore questions related to “how our participation in social groups shapes our worldviews (particularly via phenomena like polarization, partisanship, and heresy) and how pernicious social artifacts and processes (like conspiracy theories, propaganda, and “fake news”) affect our agential identities.”

Holdier serves as the President Pro Tempore of the UArk Graduate–Professional Student Congress for the 2021–2022 academic year. He requests your feedback – let him know how GPSC can help serve your interests as a graduate student at the U of A!



**Kadesha Treco**

### *Social Justice Policy*

As a native of the Bahamas and a person with a disability, Treco recognizes that access to higher education is an increasing privilege. Specializing in social justice, she intends to better understand the historical, sociocultural,

and political dynamics that influence the ability of persons with disabilities to participate in higher education, and generally, in the society at-large. Her research interests concentrate on critical social theories, including disability studies, critical race theory, and intersectionality studies.

Becoming an educator is Treco’s greatest career aspiration. She is impassioned to teach in higher education or in a community context at a non-profit organization. She is also drawn to consultancy work on diversity, equity, and inclusion as well as to policy analysis for institutions and organizations to “insure they are developing and maintaining policies that foster and promote equitable work and learning spaces.”



**Becky Purcell**

### *Social Justice Policy*

With multiple graduate degrees -- Master of Education in Recreation & Leisure Studies (UGA), Master of Arts in Christian Education (Union Presbyterian Seminary), Master of Divinity (Columbia Theological Seminary) -- Purcell joins the program as a Presbyterian pastor and former school board

member of Fayetteville (AR) Public Schools.

She chose the social justice specialization for its “interdisciplinary, applied, and community-oriented focus” which should help her “open channels for a broader, clearer, use of and interpretation of biblical languages.” Purcell wants to “develop a new way of teaching the Bible through direct translation” for both secondary and post-secondary students. She intends to apply her experience from the program to establish new courses that translate the Bible, i.e. language meaning, interpretation, etc., and that enable her to teach post-secondary classes to include, for example, “Politics and the Bible” or “Faith and Country.”

Purcell will also pair her PUBP studies with a graduate certification in African & African American Studies where she will explore the legacy of the African diaspora and African descended people's global experiences. She is interested in discovering strategies that can be used in achieving social justice.

*She chose the social justice specialization for its “interdisciplinary, applied, and community-oriented focus.”*

*Have something you would like to see in the next newsletter? Let us know!*

**Email: [jbkerr@uark.edu](mailto:jbkerr@uark.edu)**



**Glendola Flake**

### *Social Justice Policy*

Flake holds a Master’s Degree in Social Work from Missouri State University and joins the program with a concentration in social justice policy. As co-founder of Joplin for Justice, a platform for collective community action, Flake promotes awareness, education, and action to address systemic injustice at the community level. She is Vice-Chairperson for the Emancipation Celebration Committee of Joplin (MO), whose mission is to unite the community to celebrate freedom and promote cultural diversity through celebration and preservation of African American History. She is a board member of JOMO Equality, a support group for LGBTQIA+ individuals and allies. Flake is a recipient of the 2021 Pathfinder Award (Joplin, MO) given for her efforts in promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in the community, particularly for her achievement of providing EDI training and/or consulting services to over 1500 professionals in the mid-west region.

Flake’s research interests include understanding “best practices” for EDI education and addressing disparities

diverse backgrounds.

She believes her life experiences are what drives her passion for activism. She is a proud single mother and first-generation college student who is working to make a difference.

## Alumni Spotlight



**Dr. Teresa Sparks**

Dr. Teresa Sparks graduated from the program in July 2021 with a specialization in health policy, and has recently started a tenure-track Assistant Professor position at Texas Woman’s University (TWU) at the Houston Health Science Campus.

TWU has been co-educational since 1994 and is the largest state-supported university primarily for women. TWU has a history of student diversity, with a purpose to “educate a woman, empower the world.” The Houston Health Science Campus is located within the Texas Medical Center - the largest medical complex in the world encompassing approximately 54

medicine related institutions - 21 hospitals, 8 specialty institutions, 8 academic and research institutions, 4 medical schools, 7 nursing schools, 4 public health organizations, 2 pharmacy schools, and a dental school.

When asked what skills/knowledge the PUBP program provided to help you succeed in your current position, Dr. Sparks responded:

“I am new to my position, so ultimate success is to be determined (insert smile emoji). I believe the interdisciplinary and collaborative nature of the Public Policy program - faculty, students, and program curriculum - provided a rich foundation as I move forward in developing my program of research, an extension and expansion of my dissertation research focused on how law and policy affect population health. Additionally, the core public policy content taught in the program enhances my skill and ability to develop content and teach public policy, specifically health policy.”

## 2020 Dissertation Award Winners

Congratulations to both Dr. Larra Rucker and Dr. Grant West for receiving the 2020 William Miller Public Policy Distinguished Dissertation Award!



**Dr. Larra Rucker**

Rucker’s dissertation, “Understanding Early Childhood Education Workforce Policy: The Relationship between Policy and Teacher Qualification Attainment,” explores the social construction of early childhood (EC) teacher qualification, comprehensive of all key dimensions of qualification (certification, education, experience, and professional development) at the state level.

She examines child care licensing policies regulating EC lead teacher qualification attainment, a subset of EC workforce policy, for all 50 states, the qualification attainment of state EC lead teacher workforces, and the relationship between state child care licensing policy regulating qualification attainment and the subsequent qualification of EC lead teachers.

Findings demonstrate that policies influence qualification attainment for EC bachelor’s degree, certification, and professional development. She contends that with an increase in the stringency of regulations that EC lead teacher workforces become more qualified. This information may help policymakers to create and support research-based policy changes as a mechanism to improve EC lead teacher qualification.



**Dr. Grant West**

West’s dissertation, “Interpreting Potential Groundwater Policies through Modeling of Market and Non-Market Benefits and Costs,” explores three areas: 1) groundwater resources management policy, specifically examining the potential for improved groundwater outcomes via policy programs that offer financial incentives to agricultural producers to adopt new water-saving technologies and practices, 2) the public willingness to pay for long-term groundwater management, and 3) systematic influences of narrative frames about climate change on elicited groundwater and policy preferences.

The results suggest that policies solely targeting economic efficiency are insufficient to counter trends of long-term aquifer declines, and that the public is willing to pay for long-term groundwater management. Additionally, Grant demonstrates that different types of people respond to a cultural narrative in the case of groundwater policy preferences.

## In Focus: Faculty-Student Collaboration



(From left to right: Dr. William Schreckhise and PUBP student Eric Button.)

### Eric Button and Dr. William Schreckhise

PUBP Ph.D. candidate Eric Button began his research on veterans' policy while taking Dr. Schreckhise's American Political Institutions course during his first semester in the Political Science M.A. program.

Finding a similar interest in the development of veterans' treatment courts (VTCs) or specialized courts of law, akin to drug courts, that provide an alternative form of justice for military veterans who have been charged with crimes, Button and Schreckhise conducted an event history analysis where they modeled the different possible factors that led to their creation.

They found that the method by which judges are selected play a role. States that elect their judges adopted VTCs at a faster rate than those that appoint

them. States with nonpartisan judicial elections are even more likely to adopt them sooner than states with partisan elections. States with larger vet populations are also more likely to adopt VTCs.

These findings are interesting for a couple of reasons. First, there has been a lot written about how the method by which states select their judges could affect how judges behave. But, nothing has been done to study the role judicial selection methods play in shaping the actual workings and structure of the courts. Their study shows there is a relationship, at least as far as it goes with the creation of VTCs. Second, it is interesting because of all of the variables included in their models, the method of judicial selection is the best at explaining when the VTCs were

adopted. In other words, VTCs are very much a creature of judicial politics.

Schreckhise and Button plan to use the same approach to explain the creation of other alternative courts like drug courts and family courts.

### Fall 2021 Research & Professional Development Sessions

(sessions will be remote via Zoom)

Friday, November 12,  
12:00 – 1:00 p.m.

The political economy of agricultural policies: A systematic review of empirical evidence by Dr. Alvaro Durand Morat and Abigail B. Long

Insufficient sleep and health care utilization: A scoping review by Dr. Kolade Olatunde and Dr. Susan Patton

Friday, December 3, 12:30  
– 1:30 p.m.

Struvite recovery as a solution to the phosphate paradox: Current research and potential policy options by Leah English and Dr. Jennie Popp.

“Blatantly racist in effect”: A critical policy discourse analysis of media representation of a school district state takeover by Trish Lopez, Holly Shepherd Riesco, and Dr. Christian Z. Goering