UCI INTERDISCIPLINARY CENTER FOR THE SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF ETHICS AND MORALITY

2019 SUMMER INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

June 25, 2019 –July 18, 2019

MODULE 1. MORAL COGNITION AND EXPERIMENTAL PHILOSOPHY: HOW WE THINK ABOUT ETHICAL ISSUES

INTERN FELLOW: JESSICA GONZALEZ
Department of Logic and Philosophy of Science

Some of the most difficult issues in politics involve issues touching on deeply-held moral beliefs and values. Abortion in contemporary America is such an issue, on which both sides feel they have the moral high ground, with anti-abortion groups finding abortion is murder of innocent life and pro-choice supporters feeling anti-abortionists want to sacrifice a woman's body and take away her liberty to choose how to live her own life. Yet what if there is common ground in the way we think about issues like abortion? Is much of the problem simply not understanding how we think about moral issues?

One of the projects on which students may work at the UCI Ethics Center this summer addresses this problem directly through a creative combination of traditional philosophical approach with a scientific approach. After an introduction to an exciting new field -- experimental philosophy -- and a philosophical discussion of how the literature views differences in morality, students will ask how we might gain empirical insight into how people actually do think about moral beliefs and values. For example, when they think differently, how do those differences play out in real life? Students will work together to develop possible interview and survey questions to be posed and integrated into an actual experiment about moral differences. No pre-requisite from philosophy is required.

PROJECT 2. DOES EDUCATION MAKE BETTER CITIZENS?

INTERN FELLOWS: NATHAN CHAN AND BENJAMIN HOYT, Department of Political Science, UCI

Students may participate in an original research project designed to determine whether taking liberal arts courses encourages civic engagement, especially among minority students. Students will be trained in coding and analyzing data, including elementary statistical analysis using original data to answer three questions. (1) What effect does taking introductory courses on government and politics have on one's feelings of political efficacy, trust, and one's stock of political knowledge? (2) Do these courses help students develop a voice about the issues of their time, or acknowledge the importance of having an opinion about what goes on in their political world? (3) Do these effects work differently among students of different backgrounds—first

generation, Latina/o, Asian American, or non-US—and in an educational environment that is markedly more diverse than universities in the past?

Entry level political science courses are the most substantive engagement with explicitly political curriculum that many undergraduates will have, and they represent one of the most fruitful places to measure the impact of civic education today. While previous scholars focused on the political efficacy gap between white and black students, no one has conducted a study of civic education in a setting that resembles the modern university. Among the US News Top 50 Universities UCI is one of four recognized as a Hispanic/Latinx serving institution, 17% of its undergraduates are not US citizens, and 43% of its American students identify as Asian. In addition, half of the students in its 2018 graduating class were first generation college attendees. What is happening at UCI is what is happening across the US higher education in microcosm. If we want to understand what impact civic education has today, schools like UCI are where we need to start.

In this project, interns will be asked to code the data from our Spring 2019 survey. We will teach them to cross-validate the work of their fellow interns. We expect to have around 400 completed panel surveys (which is to say we will have about 800 total surveys to code). If time permits, we will demonstrate some of the basics of using the R coding language, and how to create and run statistical models. All members of our intern team will receive acknowledgement in the paper, and being acknowledged when we present the paper at national conferences.

PROJECT 3. EMOTIONS AND POLITICS

INTERN FELLOW: MONICA DE ROCHE, Department of Political Science.

What is the role of emotions in predicting support for public policies? As part of this project, we will collect data from the American National Election Studies (ANES) survey results over the past four election cycles. The specific data to be obtained is participants' level of agreement on questions assessing emotional indices, such as degree of trust, along with preferences for public policies that impact the treatment of other people, such as the use of force to resolve international conflict. Data will be controlled by gender to identify any gender variations. Results will then be compared and analyzed using the Survey Documentation and Analysis (SDA) computer software to identify potential shifts in preferences over time, and also to provide a predictive element for further analysis.

This is important research because if indeed there is a relationship between variables such as trust and willingness to use force to obtain or maintain power, then one could potentially predict a relationship between trust and other pertinent measures in the public consciousness, such as gun control legislation or domestic violence policies. The ability to predict support for policy measures is not only a valuable tool for political scientists, but it can also aid students in a myriad of other disciples to better understand the role that emotions play in the ways in which we subsequently treat others, whether via direct interaction, or through the public policies that we support, or fail to support. This Ethics Center Module will additionally provide students

invaluable experience in survey data collection and analysis, as well as hands-on training utilizing political science computer software to interpret results.

PROJECT 4. AFRICA IN THE WORLD: THE IMPACT OF THE 21ST CENTURY GREAT POWER COMPETITION ON DIVERSITY IN SUB-SAHARA AFRICA.

INTERN FELLOW:

The history of great power competition in Africa is intractably linked to the scramble for Africa between 1881 and 1914 which culminated in the colonization of the continent (Brooke-Smith, 1987). Western nations as part of the scramble partitioned Africa without considering the complex social and cultural relationship that existed on the continent (Koponen, 1993). As a result, many modern African states did not start as coherent units but as artificial creations of colonial powers (David, 1991). In effect, citizens of these countries belong to different ethnic groups that sometimes have conflicting interests or share a long history of animosity toward each other, creating a situation where a national identity cannot emerge without concerted and painstaking efforts to transcend these differences (ACLED, 2016; Doyle and Sambanis, 2000). This careless partitioning and the systems of governance that were used to govern the colonies either exacerbated already existing animosity between ethnic groups or caused groups that used that lived together peacefully to start hating each other (Straus, 2008). The legacies of the first, known, scramble for Africa is one of division, interethnic conflict, underdevelopment, and instability (Michalopoulos and Papaioannou, 2016). This situation raises the question: what is the impact of the 21st-century great power competition in sub-Sahara Africa on ethnic tension? Is it bringing people together or it is leading to tribalism?

To answer these questions, we will map out the design and production networks (DPN) of companies from the U.S., China, and Japan in sub-Sahara, as a proxy for great power competition. After mapping out the geographical concentration of this competition, the pre and post-DPN, segregation pattern of these localities will be examined. We also collect and analyze data on the incidences of ethnic clash or tension in these communities.

Students who participate in this project will learn how to collect, prep, manage, geocode, and analyze data. By contributing to the project report, the group members will get the opportunity to improve their academic writing skills. Lastly, the final product of this project, a research report, can eventually be submitted for publication; thus, giving the members the opportunity to get published.