

Stephanie M. Ahrens

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Scholarly Interests

History of political thought, political philosophy, political virtue, American political theory, democratic theory, American politics

Education

University of Chicago

Ph.D., Political Science, expected June 2020

Dissertation: "The Limits of Distrust"

Committee: Nathan Tarcov (chair), William Howell, and James Wilson

M.A., Political Science, 2014

Baylor University

B.A., University Scholar (Political Science, Classics, Great Texts), 2012,
magna cum laude

Thesis: "What Happened to Public Deliberation?"

Advisor: David D. Corey

Dissertation

"The Limits of Distrust"

I argue that democratic constitutions should be crafted with the recognition that distrust has limits, even when used to balance separated powers and motivate political accountability. Relying on distrust could eventually inhibit the trust and cooperation necessary to sustain a flourishing democracy. Recognizing that democracy requires trust, makes trust high-risk, and should limit distrust, I define a distinctly democratic trust that addresses the problem of balancing these needs. Democratic trust is a context-specific form of trust that considers both the practical needs and philosophical principles of democracy. Through a close reading of the United States Constitution and *The Federalist*, I ultimately argue that the Constitution problematically relies on distrust.

Work in Progress

Distrust and the American Founding

What Is Democratic Trust

Political Faith: Putting Faith in the Devil in Machiavelli's *Discorsi*

Teaching

Teaching Assistant, University of Chicago

The American Presidency, Winter 2019

Introduction to Political Theory, Winter 2019, Spring 2016

Political Leadership: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives, Autumn 2015

Introduction to American Politics, Autumn 2015

Academic Service, Professional Development, and Work Experience

Reviewer, *American Journal of Political Science*

Mentor, University of Chicago Political Science Association, 2016-2017

Attended, Workshop on Teaching in the College, Chicago Center for Teaching, 2014

Editorial Assistant, Leo Strauss Center, 2013-2016

Member, Social Sciences Minority Graduate Student Development Program, 2012-2014

Workshop and Conference Participation

Stephanie M. Ahrens, "Trust in the Government, Distrust Each Other: A Democratic Dilemma," to be presented at the Kinder Institute for Constitutional Democracy's Shawnee Trail Conference, April 2020.

Stephanie M. Ahrens, "The Diminishing Returns of Relying on Distrust to Protect a Democracy" to be presented at the Duke Graduate Conference in Political Theory, February 6-7, 2020.

Stephanie M. Ahrens, "What Is Democratic Trust?" to be presented at the annual meeting of the Western Political Science Association, 2020.

Stephanie M. Ahrens, "The Trust That Democracy Demands," to be presented at the annual meeting of the Southern Political Science Association, January 2020.

Stephanie M. Ahrens, "Foundations of Distrust: The State of Political Trust in *The Federalist*," presented at the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, April 4, 2018.

Stephanie M. Ahrens, "Foundations of Distrust: The State of Political Trust in *The Federalist*," presented at the annual meeting of the Southern Political Science Association, January 4, 2018.

Stephanie M. Ahrens, "Distrust and *The Federalist*," presented at the University of Texas Graduate Conference on Public Law, Austin, TX, November 4, 2017.

Stephanie M. Ahrens, "Trusting in a Thing That Can Easily Deceive You: Political Faith in Machiavelli's *Discourses on Livy*," presented at the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, IL, April 17, 2015.

Discussant for Alexander Orwin, "Beauty, Diversity and Transience: Revisiting Democracy in Alfarabi and Averroes," University of Chicago Political Theory Workshop, October 14, 2013.

Fellowships and Awards

SPSA, Prestage-Cook Travel Award, 2020

Dissertation Completion Fellowship, University of Chicago Division of Social Sciences, 2019-2020

Institute for Humane Studies Fellowship, 2018-2019

Honorarium for University of Texas Graduate Conference on Public Law, 2017

Social Sciences Fellowship, University of Chicago, 2012-2017