

Office hours: Professor Lauren Prather



The GPS faculty member opens up about some of the dearest objects that adorn her office, painting a picture of her professional backstory and personal interests

By Rachel Hommel | GPS News



[View full image on ThingLink](#)

Step inside the office of [Lauren Prather](#) at the UC San Diego School of Global Policy and Strategy (GPS) and you will find a professor dedicated to democracy promotion, democratization and the humanitarian spirit.

Prather's research focuses on exploring the political economy of foreign aid, supported by the National Science Foundation, the UC San Diego Hellman Fellowship, the MIT Election Lab and the Princeton University Center for Human Values.

Currently, she is breaking new ground exploring multiple types of foreign influences on elections as illustrated in her most recent work in the country of Georgia. As a [Hellman](#) fellow, Prather was able to expand her research to examine foreign electoral interventions and their effects on local trust in elections.

To get the big picture on Prather's professional backstory and personal interests, hover over the images above.

3 questions with Professor Lauren Prather

What is your academic focus?

I am a political scientist and work in the field of international relations. My work generally focuses on how individuals are affected by foreign policy and how this affects their political attitudes and behaviors.

What are the real-world impacts of your research?

Right now, I am writing a book on how foreign countries affect trust in elections. Whether individuals trust elections impacts whether they buy into the democratic process as a whole. We need to understand whether international democracy promotion can improve trust where it is lacking and we need to understand whether foreign election meddling, like Russia's attempts to influence the 2016 presidential election in the U.S., undermines electoral trust. This is critical to understand the trajectory of democracy in the world today.

What skills or understanding do you hope students leave your class with?

I teach a core class called International Politics and Security. In that class, we spend a lot of time discussing game theoretic logic and applying it to different

international security topics, such as war. My hope is that the basic theoretical insights from the class can not only be taken and applied by students who are interested in international security, but also much more broadly. Understanding the game theoretic logic behind bargaining, for example, explains not just why countries might go to war but can also help you win an argument with your roommate.