Melissa N. Baker

Contact Information

Department of Political Science and Public Administration
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Academic Positions

Assistant Professor of Political Science — 2022-
Department of Political Science & Public Administration
University of Texas El Paso, El Paso, TX

Faculty Affiliate, Policy, Elections, and Representation Lab — 2022-
University of Toronto, Toronto, ON

Postdoctoral Associate, Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy — 2021-2022
University of Toronto, Toronto, ON

Visiting Instructor, Department of Political Science — Spring 2021
Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA

Education

Ph.D. Political Science, University of California, Merced — 2021

B.A. Psychology, University of Nebraska-Lincoln — 2015

Additional Training and Experience

Inclusive Teaching for Equitable Learning microcredential courses — 2022-2025
Association of College and University Educators

Teaching Matters Workshops: — 2015-2021
Remote Instruction, Best Practices for Large Classrooms, Best Practices for (Small) Group Discussions, Lesson and Curriculum Design.
Center for Engaged Teaching and Learning (CETL), UC Merced

Political Science Laboratory manager — 2016-2018
Department of Political Science
University of California, Merced

Stanford Summer Institute in Political Psychology — 2016
Stanford University

Research Interests

Political Psychology, Political Communication, Political Behavior, Political Cognition, Cognitive and Mental Health, Information Engagement and Behavior, Emotions, Experimental Methods

Peer-Reviewed Papers (*student)

Denny, E. K. & Baker M. N. (forthcoming). Mental Health Resources and Political Engagement. *Social Science Quarterly.*

Lamb, M., Baker, M.N., & Landgrave, M. (2026). Juventud in Revolt? Linked Fate, Political Attitudes, and Presidential Candidate Preferences of Young Latinos in the 2024 Election. *Analysis of Social Issues and Public Policy.*

Canelo, K. S. & Baker, M. N. (2025). Intersecting Identities and Perceptions of Judicial Misconduct. *Social Science Quarterly.*

Merkley, E. & Baker, M. N. (2025). Big-5 Personality Traits and Their Dynamic and Conditional Effects on COVID-19 Attitudes and Behaviours. *Politics and the Life Sciences*, 1-27.

Baker, M. N., Pereira Filho*, A. J., Galipeau*, T., & Friesen, A. (2025). Affective Language in the Most Important Issues of the 2019 and 2021 Canadian Elections. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research.*

Baker, M. N. & Canelo, K. S. (2025). Judges Behaving Badly: Judicial Misconduct and a Threat to Rights. *Journal of Experimental Political Science, 12*(2), 151-160.
Media coverage: 1

Baker, M. N. & Merkley, E. (2023). Dynamic Role of Personality in Explaining COVID-19 Vaccine Hesitancy and Refusal. *Frontiers in Psychology, 14*, 1163570.
Media coverage: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

Haas, I. J., Baker, M. N., & Gonzalez, F. J. (2021). Understanding the Neural Underpinnings of Uncertainty in Political Evaluation using Functional MRI. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences, 376*(1822), 20200138.

Lopez, L. D., Moorman, K., Schneider, S., Baker, M. N., & Holbrook, C. (2019). Morality is Relative: Anger, Disgust, and Aggression as Contingent Responses to Sibling Versus Stranger Harm. *Emotion, 21*(2), 376.

Haas, I. J., Baker, M. N., & Gonzalez, F. J. (2017) Who Can Deviate from the Party Line? Political Ideology Moderates Evaluation of Incongruent Policy Positions in Insula and Anterior Cingulate Cortex. *Social Justice Research*, 30, 355-380.

Peer-Reviewed Chapters (*student)

Baker, M. N. (2026). Anxiety in Politics. Elgar Encyclopedia of Experimental Social Science.

Baker, M. N., Stives, C.*, & Neufeld, O.* (2025). Neuroscience. In Nai, A., Grömping, M., & Wirz, D. (Eds). Elgar Encyclopedia of Political Communication.

Cantwell-Chavez, D.* & Baker, M. N. (2024). Doing it for Ourselves: Creating Spaces for, and by, Early Career Instructors. In Teaching Political Science and International Relations (pp 183-193). Springer Nature Switzerland.

Hibbing, M. V., Baker, M. N., & Herzog, K. A. (2019) Psychophysiology in Political Decision Making Research. In Oxford Encyclopedia of Political Decision Making. Oxford University Press.

Papers With A Revise & Resubmit

"Mindfulness Over Matter: Boosting Thoughtful Information Consumption in an Era of Misinformation" With Elaine K. Denny. (Political Psychology)

"Biological Attributions for Political Ideology decrease Political Prejudice and Intolerance." With Ingrid J. Haas. Working paper: https://psyarxiv.com/pkjh7/ (Nature Communications Psychology)

"Latino like Everyone Else? The Potential for Using Student Convenience Samples in the Study of Latino Politics" With Matt Lamb and Michelangelo Landgrave. (Political Research Quarterly)

Papers Under Review (*student)

"Dispositional Traits and Susceptibility to Political Anxiety"
Working paper: https://psyarxiv.com/3se54

"Perceptions of Extreme Political Candidates"

"Humor, Social Media, and Information Engagement" With Cayleb Stives*

"Depression and Vulnerability to Misinformation" With Christopher Ojeda and Elaine Denny

"Current Events and Trends in Political Science Academic Job Postings" With Amanda Friesen and Junsoo Pak*

"Public Perceptions of Political Violence Terms" With M.P. Broache and Peter D. Carey

Other Publications

"Politics can add to mental health challenges" El Paso Matters. Link

"People view judicial figures previously accused of sexual misconduct as a threat to womens rights" LSE USAPP. Link. With Kayla S. Canelo

"Mis- and Disinformation During the 2021 Canadian Federal Election" Link. With Media Ecosystem Observatory

"Ranked-Choice Voting is No Refuge for Extreme Candidates" New America. Link.

Grants

Insight Grant — $397,000
Social Science and Humanities Research Council — 2025-2031
Project: Stress and Polarization: Unintended Consequences of Political Competition for Democracy and Mental Health
With Jordan Mansell (co-PI) and Amanda Friesen (PI)

Career Enhancement Award — $4,950
College of Liberal Arts, UTEP — 2024-2025
Project: False Eye of the Beholder: Public Opinion on Deep Fakes and Pornography
With Amanda J. Goodson

APSA Centennial Center Research Grant — $2500
American Political Science Association — Summer 2023
Project: Judge Misconduct and Perceptions of a Threat to Rights
With Kayla S. Canelo

APSA Centennial Center Research Grant — $2600
American Political Science Association — Fall 2021
Project: Perceptions and Understanding of Political Violence Concepts
With M.P. Broache and Peter D. Carey

Interdisciplinary Grant — $2940
Interdisciplinary Grants Program, University of California, Merced — AY 2020-2021
Project: Working Group on Emotions in a Political Society

Electoral Reform Research Group Project Funding — $2440
New America — Spring 2020
Project: Candidate Extremity and Ranked Choice Voting

Psychology and Economics of Poverty (PEP) Seed Funding Competition — $2000
Center for Effective Global Action, UC Berkeley — Spring 2020
Project: Contextualizing Emotions: An Intervention to Increase Political Participation in Impoverished Populations

Invited Talks and Workshops

Mental Health and Political Engagement. Presented at the University of Illinois Politics Workshop Speaker Series, 2026.

Mindfulness and Misinformation. Presented at the Department of Psychology Colloquium at the University of Texas at El Paso, 2025.

Does Stress Make Us More Susceptible to Misinformation? Keynote presented at Illinois State Political Science Conference, 2024.

Cognitive Resilience Under Stress: The Tradeoff Between Mental Wellbeing and Political Mobilization. Presented at the Department of Psychology Colloquium at the University of Texas at El Paso, 2023

Neuroscience and Politics. Presented in Biology and Politics seminar, University of Illinois, 2023

Controversial Judges and Threats to Women's Rights. Presented at Morality, Misconduct, and Public Judgments of Political Figures workshop, University of Toronto Summer 2022.

Biology and Politics Workshop. Hosted at University of California, Merced Spring 2022.

Biological Attributions for Political Ideology decrease Political Prejudice and Intolerance. Presented at the Science and Politics Workshop, Western University Fall 2021

Susceptibility to Political Anxiety: The Role of Individual Differences in Anxiety and Civic Engagement. Presented at the Hot Politics Lab, Summer 2020.

External Awards

Marian Irish Award Southern Political Science Association	2021
Travel Grant American Political Science Association	Fall 2021
Early Career Committee Travel Award International Society of Political Psychology	Summer 2021
Prestage-Cook Award Southern Political Science Association	$300 Fall 2019
Annual Meeting Grant (through the National Science Foundation) Society for Political Methodology	$1325 Summer 2019
Annual Meeting Grant (through the National Science Foundation) Society for Political Methodology	$1071 Summer 2018
Travel Award Graduate Student Association, University of California, Merced	$400 Spring 2017
Undergraduate Creative Activities and Research Experience Award University of Nebraska-Lincoln	$2400/year AYs 2012 - 2015

Teaching Experience

University of Texas at El Paso:

Graduate

Quantitative Research Methods I (POLS 5300)	Fall 2023
Political Communication (POLS 5313)	Summer 2023, Fall 2025
American Political Behavior (POLS 5310)	Spring 2023, Fall 2024

Undergraduate

Ethnicity and Race in American Politics (POLS 3314)	Spring 2025
Research in Political Science (POLS 3600)	Fall 2023
Political Psychology (POLS 4319)	Spring 2023
Public Opinion, Media, and Technology (POLS 3313)	Fall 22, Spring 24, Fall 25
Introduction to American Government (POLS 2311)	Spring 24, Fall 24, Spring 25 Spring 26

Wellesley College

Political Psychology (POLI 329)	Spring 2021

University of California, Merced (Instructor of Record)

Public Opinion (POLI 125)	Spring 2021
Voting Behavior, Campaigns, and Elections (POLI 120)	Summer 2020
Political Psychology (POLI 123)	Summer 2019
The Presidency (POLI 101)	Spring 2019

Advising and Theses

Political Science MA Thesis Chair:
Adriana Valero

Political Science MA Thesis Committee:
Denise Saenz

Political Science MA Final Paper Chair:
Nestor Espino
Sahara Rodriguez

Political Science MA Final Paper Committee:
Carlos Fierro

Psychology Ph.D. Student:
Taylor Bell (primary advisor)
Julianna Pluma (primary advisor)

Psychology MA Thesis Committee:
Taylor Bell, Julianna Pluma, Angie Salas

Service (UTEP departmental)	Committee Member Graduate Committee	2022-
	Department Social Media	2024-2026
	Department Webmaster	2024-2025
Service (UTEP)	Committee Member Fulbright Committee Student Fellowships and Awards	2023-
	Advocate (Organizer) Interdisciplinary Research and Education Community of Practice	2023-
	Undergraduate Research Symposium Judge Campus Office of Undergraduate Research Initiatives	2023-
	Organizer Interdisciplinary Colloquium Series	2025-
Professional Service	Council Chair Association for Politics and the Life Sciences	2025-
	Council Member Association for Politics and the Life Sciences	2024-
	Social Media Association for Politics and the Life Sciences	2023-2025
	Section Co-chair International Society for Political Psychology New Theoretical and Methodological Advancements section	2022-2023
	Co-chair Inclusive Pedagogy Virtual Community Western Political Science Association	2022-
	Mentor American Political Science Association Mentoring Program	2022-
	Mentor Midwestern Political Science Association Mentorship Program	2022-
	Reviewer: American Political Science Review, Political Behavior, Research and Politics Journal of Experimental Political Science, American Politics Research, Journal of Elections, Public Opinion, and Parties, Political Psychology, Electoral Studies, Conflict Management and Peace Science, International Journal of Public Opinion Research, Politics & Life Sciences, Behavioral Sciences, PNAS Nexus, Canadian Journal of Political Science, Cognition and Emotion, Journal of Public Health, Psychology, Crime, and Law, Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society: Biological Sciences, Palgrave, Southeast European and Black Sea Studies	

Service (UCM)	Committee Member Institutional Review Board University of California, Merced	2019-2021
	Department Delegate Graduate Student Association University of California, Merced	2020-2021
	Graduate Group Peer Mentor Department of Political Science University of California, Merced	2019-2021
	Organizer Graduate Student Research Feedback Sessions Department of Political Science University of California, Merced	2018-2021
	Advisor Bobcat Model United Nations Undergraduate Student Organization University of California, Merced	2017-2021
Internal Awards (UCM)	2019 Departmental Top Paper Award "Media Framing and Audience Costs." With Peter D. Carey	Summer 2019
	2019 Departmental Teaching Award The Presidency (POLI 101)	Summer 2019

Conference Presentations

Baker, Melissa N. & Friesen, A. Political Engagement and Green and Blue Spaces. Paper prepared for the Texas American Behavior Conference at Texas A&M University.

Landgrave, M., Baker, M. N., Lamb, M., & Lucero, E. Southwest Survey. Roundtable presented at the 2024 Politics of Race, Immigration, and Ethnicity Consortium at the University of Texas at Austin.

Baker, M. N. & Denny E. K. Mindfulness over Matter: Improving Thoughtful Information Consumption in an Era of Misinformation. Paper prepared for the 2024 Southern Political Science Association annual meeting. New Orleans, LA.

Baker, M. N. & Denny, E. K. Does Stress Make Us More Susceptible to Political Misinformation? Paper prepared for the Political Communication preconference of the 2023 American Political Science Association annual meeting. Los Angeles, CA.

Broache, M. P., Baker, M. N., & Carey, P. D. Understanding the Gap Between Public and Scholarly Concepts of Political Violence. Paper prepared for the 2023 Midwestern Political Science Association annual meeting. Chicago, IL.

Baker, M. N. & Canelo, K. S. Controversial Judges and Women's Rights. Paper prepared for the 2023 Midwestern Political Science Association meeting. Chicago, IL.

Baker, M. N. & Loewen, P. J. Mental Health and Political Attitudes. Paper prepared for the 2023 Western Political Science Association annual meeting. San Francisco, CA.

Baker, M. N. & Denny, E. K. Does Stress Make Us More Susceptible to Political Misinformation? Paper prepared for the 2023 Western Political Science Association annual meeting. San Francisco, CA.

Broache, M. P., Baker, M. N., & Carey, P. D. Public Scholarship and Popular Attitudes Toward Democratic Backsliding in the United States: A Conjoint Survey Experiment. Paper prepared for the 2022 Midwestern Political Science Association annual meeting. Chicago, Il.

Baker, M. N., Pereira Filho, A. J., & Friesen, A. Identities and Emotions in the Most Important Issues of the 2021 Canadian Election. Paper prepared for the 2022 Midwestern Political Science Association annual meeting. Chicago, Il.

Baker, M. N. Dispositional Traits and Susceptibility to Anxiety. Paper prepared for the 2021 Harvard Experimental Political Science meeting. Remote meeting.

Baker, M. N. Dispositional Traits and Susceptibility to Anxiety. Paper prepared for the 2020 American Political Science Association annual meeting. Remote meeting.

Baker, M. N. Political Engagement and Susceptibility to Anxiety. Paper prepared for the 2020 Midwestern Political Science Association annual meeting, Chicago, Il.
Conference canceled due to COVID-19.

Baker, M. N. & Warren, C. Political Stress vs. Political Anxiety: Related by Distinct Concepts. Paper prepared for the 2020 Midwestern Political Science Association annual meeting, Chicago, Il.
Conference canceled due to COVID-19.

Baker, M. N. & Canelo, K. Controversial Judges and Women's Rights. Paper prepared for the 2020 Midwestern Political Science Association annual meeting, Chicago, Il.
Conference canceled due to COVID-19.

Baker, M. N. The Role of Attention in Experiencing Political Anxiety. Poster presented at the 2019 Society for Political Methodology annual meeting, Cambridge, MA.

Baker, M. N. The Role of Individual Traits in Experiencing Political Anxiety. Paper presented at the 2019 University of California, Riverside Political Behavior Conference, Riverside, CA.

Carey, P. D. & Baker, M. N. Media Framing and Audience Costs. Paper presented at the 2019 Western Political Science Association annual meeting, San Diego, CA.

Baker. M. N., The Role of Individual Traits in Experiencing Political Anxiety. Paper presented at 2019 Western Political Science Association meeting, San Diego, CA.

Baker, M. N., Schneider, S. P., & Haas, I. J. Unstable High Self-Esteem and Support for Political Aggression. Paper presented at the 2019 Midwestern Political Science Association annual meeting, Chicago, Il.

Baker, M. N. Anxiety and Information Seeking: The Role of Political Interest and State vs. Trait Anxiety. Paper presented at the 2019 Midwestern Political Science Association annual meeting, Chicago, Il.

Baker, M. N. & Carey, P. D. Framing and Audience Costs. Poster presented at the 2018 Society for Political Methodology annual meeting, Provo, UT.

Baker, M. N., Schneider, S. P., & Haas, I. J. The Relationship Between Unstable Self-Esteem, Aggression, and Political Violence. Paper presented at the 2018 Midwestern Political Science Association annual meeting, Chicago, IL.

Baker, M. N. & Herzog, K. A. The Impact of Extreme Candidates on Ideological Self Perceptions. Paper presented at the 2018 Midwestern Political Science Association annual meeting, Chicago, IL.

Baker, M. N. & Haas, I. J. The Effects of Ideology Attribution on Political Attitudes, Tolerance, and Perception of Polarization. Paper presented at the 2018 Western Political Science Association annual meeting, San Francisco, CA.

Baker, M. N., Schneider, S. P., & Haas, I. J. Self-esteem and causal attributions for political attitudes and behavior. Paper presented at the 2017 Midwestern Political Science Association annual meeting, Chicago, IL.

Baker, M. N. & Haas, I. J. The Effects of Ideology Attribution on Political Attitudes and Tolerance. Paper presented at the 2017 Society for Personality and Social Psychology annual conventions political psychology preconference. San Antonio, TX.

Baker, M. N. & Haas, I. J. Attributing Political Ideology to Biology Versus Choice Influences Attitudes About Political Outgroups. Poster presented at the 2016 Society for Personality and Social Psychology annual convention, San Diego, CA.

Baker, M. N. & Haas, I. J. Uncertainty, Threat, and Changes in Executive Function. Poster presented at the 2015 Midwestern Psychological Association annual meeting, Chicago, IL.

Baker, M., Soto, E., Wanser, B. & Garza, J. Testing a Developmentally Sensitive Emotional Flanker Task in an Adult Population: An ERP Study. Poster presented at the 2014 Spring Research Fair at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, NE.

Baker, M., Garza, J., Choi, H.J. & Andrews-Espy, K. Inhibitory Control and Emotional Processing in Children Prenatally Exposed to Tobacco. Poster presented at the 2013 Spring Research Fair at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, NE.