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Martha Wilfahrt

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

Department of Political Science,University of California, Berkeley
Associate Professor, July 2026-present
Assistant Professor, 2018-2026
Department of Political Science, Northwestern University
Visiting Assistant Professor, 2017-18
Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow, 2015-17

EDUCATION

PhD, Government, Cornell University, 2015
MA, Political Science, Indiana University, Bloomington, 2008
BA, Geography & Political Science (with distinction), University of Wisconsin, Madison, 2005

PUBLICATIONS

Book

2021. *Precolonial Legacies in Postcolonial Politics: Representation and Redistribution in Rural Africa.* Cambridge University Press (Cambridge Series in Comparative Politics)

Winner, Allan Sharlin Memorial Book Award, Social Science History Association (2022); Honorable mention: QMMR Sartori Best Book Award, 2022; Long-Listed for the Luebbert Best Book Award, 2022

Journal articles

Forthcoming. Colonial Legacies, Collective Efficacy, and Rural Development: Evidence from the Togo-Ghana Border (with Natalie Letsa) *Comparative Political Studies*

Forthcoming. Unspoken Hierarchies: The Enduring Effects of Caste Discrimination in Africa (with Leonardo Arriola and Dominika Koter) *Perspectives in Politics*

2026. A Precolonial Paradox: Rethinking Political Centralization and its Legacies. *American Political Science Review* 120(2), pp. 419-438.

2025. Understanding the Sensitivity of Party Identification Questions in Polarized African Contexts (with Justine Davis). *Political Behavior*

2023. "Judge, Landlord, Broker, Watchman: Assessing Variation in Chiefly Duties in the Ghana-Togo Borderlands" (with Natalie Letsa) *Journal of*

Modern African Studies, 61(3), pp. 439-462.

2023. "Enumerator Experiences in Survey Data Collection in Sub-Saharan Africa" (with Justine Davis). *Comparative Political Studies* 57(4), pp. 675-709.

Winner, African Politics Conference Group Best Paper Award

2023. "Demanding Recognition: Citizen Perspectives on Clientelism in Africa" (with Jeffrey Paller & Kathleen Klaus) *African Affairs* 122/487, pp. 185-203.

2022. Citizen Response to Local Service Provision: Emerging Democratic Accountability in Decentralized West Africa? *Electoral Studies* 79.

2021. Improving Open-Source Information on African Politics, One Student at a Time (with Kristin Michelitch) *PS: Politics and Society.*

2020. The Mechanisms of Direct and Indirect Rule: Colonialism and Economic Development in Africa (with Natalie Letsa) *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 15(4), pp. 539-577.

2018. Precolonial Legacies and the Contemporary Politics of Public Goods Provision in Decentralized West Africa. *World Politics* 70(2), pp. 239-74.

2018. The Politics of Local Government Performance: Elite Cohesion and Cross-Village Constraints in Decentralized Senegal. *World Development* 103, pp. 149-61.

Winner, African Politics Conference Group Best Graduate Student Paper Award

2018. Popular Support for Democracy in Autocratic Regimes: A Micro-Level Analysis of Preferences (with Natalie Letsa). *Comparative Politics* 50(2).

WORKING PAPERS

Precolonial Institutions, Colonial Governance, and State Evolution (with Mark Dincecco, Edgar Franco-Vivanco, and Ji Yeon Hong) *Accepted at The Annual Review of Political Science, submitting June 2027*

Guns, Garrisons, and Growth: Revisiting State Formation in Africa (with Leonardo Arriola, Igor Kolesnikov & Yosef Tadesse) *Under Review*

The Political Effects of Caste in Senegal (with Leonardo Arriola and Dominika Koter)

Opposition Strongholds and their Origins in Sub-Saharan Africa (with Natalie Letsa)

Legacies of Incorporation: Land Tenure and State Capacity in Ethiopia (with Leonardo Arriola, Igor Kolesnikov & Yosef Tadesse)

IN PROGRESS

Endogenous (Re)Districting? The Politics of Subnational Boundary Creation

Indigenous Slavery and Long-Run Inequality in Africa

Book Project: The Origins of Opposition Strongholds (with Natalie Letsa)

Book Project: Tropical Subjects: Ethnographies of Experimentation

OTHER WRITING

2026. Book Review: Political Belonging in the Ghana-Togo Borderlands: Citizenship and the Vote at the Margins of the State, by Nathalie Raunet. *The Journal of Development Studies*

2022. Studying Precolonial Legacies in the Present: Insights from Fieldwork Broadstreet Blog.

TALKS & PRESENTATIONS

2026 University of California, Irvine; LSE; APSA; University of Michigan (scheduled)
2025 APSA; Princeton University; Cornell University
2024 University of Minnesota
2023 MPSA; APSA; ASA; Michigan State University; MIT
2022 APSA; ASA; University of Oklahoma
2021 APSA; ASA
2020 APSA; ASA
2019 MPSA; ISA; APSA
2018 MPSA; GLD, University of Gothenburg; APSA; ASA
2017 MPSA; MGAPE; Northwestern; APSA; ASA
2016 MPSA; Northwestern; APSA; ASA
2015 MPSA; APSA; ASA
2014 MPSA; APSA; ASA
2013 APSA; ASA

AWARDS & HONORS

Lijphart/Przeworski/Verba Dataset Award for *Atlas of 19th c. African States*, APSA Comparative Politics Section, 2026
Judith E. Gruber Faculty Fellowship, UC Berkeley, 2026-2029
African Politics Conference Group Best Paper Award, 2024
Society of Hellman Fellows, Research Grant, 2023-24
Kellogg Fellowship, University of Notre Dame, 2023-24 (declined)
Allan Sharlin Memorial Book Award, Social Science History Association (2022)
Honorable Mention, Giovanni Sartori Best Book Award, Qualitative and Multi-Method Research Section (2022)
Undergraduate Research Assistance Program Grant, Northwestern University AY 2016-17
Janice N. and Milton J. Esman Best Dissertation Prize, Cornell University 2016
African Politics Conference Group Best Graduate Student Paper 2014-15
Seed Grant, Center for the Study of Inequality, Cornell University, Fall 2014
Sage Completion Fellowship, Cornell University, 2014-15

Boren Fellow (Senegal), 2012-13
APSA Africa Workshop Fellow, University of Botswana, Gaborone, Botswana, July 2012
Houston I. Flournoy Graduate Fellowship, Cornell University, Summer 2012
Einaudi Center International Research Travel Grant 2010 (Niger), 2011 (Mali)

TEACHING

African Politics (Undergraduate, Graduate)
African Politics through Literature and Film (Undergraduate)
Political Economy of the Global South (Undergraduate, Graduate)
The Politics of International Aid (Undergraduate)
The Politics of Social Welfare (Undergraduate)
Major Themes in Comparative Politics (Field Seminar) (Graduate)
Research and Writing (MA Thesis) (Graduate)

SERVICE

UC Berkeley

Center for African Studies Advisory Board Member (2026-27)
Graduate Studies Council (2022, 2025-26)
Department citation committee (2019, 2026)
CP Field Exam Chair (2026)
Center for African Studies. Rocca Fellowship Selection Committee (2026)
Regents and Chancellor's Fellowship Interviewer (2023-24, 2026)
Philo Sherman Bennett Prize Committee (2023-26)
Faculty Search Committee (2023)
Graduate admissions (2023-24, 2022-23, 2021-22, 2019-20, 2018-19)
Comparative Politics Colloquium convener (2022-23)
Faculty Co-Organizer, Historical Social Science Workshop (2019-2021)
Field exam committee member (Comparative politics: 2023 (2x), 2019; African politics 2019)
IIS Simpson Research Grant Award Committee Member (2023, 2020)
Florence Mason Palmer Prize Judge (2025)
Center for African Studies, FLAS Selection Committee (2022, 2020)

Discipline

American Political Science Association: APSA CP Section Best Dataset Prize Committee Member (scheduled 2027); QMMR Committee Member-at-large (2024-26), QMMR Best Book Award Committee (2023), QMMR Best Article Award Committee (2021), Co-organizer, Research and Development Group African Politics Conference Group, APSA (2020), APCG Finishing-Up Grant Award Committee (2020), APCG Best Book Award Committee (2017)
Midwest Political Science Association: African Politics Section Chair (2023)
Western Political Science Association: Co-organizer, Non-Democratic Politics Mini-Workshop (2023)
Social Science History Association: Sharlin Best Book Award Committee (2023)
Graduate Applications International Network (GAIN): mentor (2020-21)

Reviewer: African Affairs, American Journal of Political Science, American Political Science Review, British Journal of Political Science, Cambridge University Press, Comparative Politics, Comparative Political Studies, Governance, Journal of Development Studies, Journal of Institutional Economics, Journal of Politics, International Journal of Comparative Sociology, International Studies Quarterly, Nature, Perspectives on Politics, Political Behavior, Social Policy and Administration, Theory and Society, World Politics, World Development

Book Manuscript Workshop discussant: Adrienne LeBas and Jessica Gotlieb, *Can Social Intermediaries Build the State?*, 2025; Dominika Koter, *Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 2023; Maria Nagawa, *Aiding State Fracture*, 2026; Noah Nathan, *The Scarce State*, 2021; Peer Schouten, *Roadblock Politics*, 2019