

Watson Honors Thesis Conference 2026

DAY 1: MONDAY, MAY 4 | 9:00am - 2:00pm

9:00 **Opening Remarks**

Dean John Friedman

9:20 **Panel 1: Military Power, Strategy, and Political Outcomes in Global Conflicts**

Faculty Moderator: Reid Pauly

- Jackson DeBorde: "Showing One's Hand: The Effect of Publicity/Opacity on the Success of a Catalytic Nuclear Posture"
 - Luc Drymer Graham: "Military-Led Democratic Transitions: A Novel Evaluation of Democratic Survival"
 - Will Vogel: "Drones Strike a Balance: Offense and Defense in the Russo-Ukrainian War"
 - Morgan Glazier: "Beyond the Narrow Strait: Mapping Autonomy in Taiwan (2016-2025)"
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10:25 **Panel 2: Institutions and Multilateral Action: Power and Limits**

Faculty Moderator: Nina Tannenwald

- Jude Farley: "Many Roads to Rome: Why States Join the International Criminal Court"
 - Davis Kelly: "Earmarked Contributions and Discursive Power in UN Peacekeeping"
 - Maggie Seidel: "The Weaponization of International Sporting Events: The 1980 and 1984 Olympic Boycotts in Cold War Politics"
 - Meg Lorraine: "Restrictive Capacity and Sanctions Evasion: European Arms Exports after Russia Sanctions"
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11:30 **Bagged Lunch**

12:00 **Panel 3: Technology, Markets, and State Power in Global Context**

Faculty Moderator: Mark Blyth

- Jenny Hu: "Exorbitant Privilege, Endogenous Fragility: The Unmet Promises of Digital De-Dollarization"
 - Elliot Smith: "Between Beijing and Brussels: Global South Agency and AI Surveillance"
 - Aderinsola Aderoju: "Developmental Autonomy in the Age of AI: A Comparative Analysis of Kenya and Nigeria"
 - Annabel Williams: "Assessing the "Spark Gap" and Other Residential Heat Pump Adoption Drivers in Europe"
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1:05 **Panel 4: Governance, Reform, and Social Policy in the United States**

Faculty Moderator: Tony Levitas

- Carston Maher: "The Architecture of Municipal Reform: Evaluating Strategic Blueprints to Address Overregulation"
 - Jacqueline Metzler: "Rhetoric Under Pressure: Protest Pressure and Kamala Harris's Shifting Campaign Rhetoric on the Israel-Hamas War"
 - Nia Mathews Cox: "Changing Minds, Changing History: Historiography and Public History within Tennessee Public Schools"
 - Yiyun Li: "Asian American Voices on Food Insecurity and Food Assistance"
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1:55 **Closing Remarks**



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DAY 2: TUESDAY, MAY 5 | 9:00am - 12:30pm

9:00 **Breakfast/Coffee and Opening Remarks**

9:20 **Panel 5: The Carceral State: Punishment, Inequality, and Reform**

Faculty Moderator: Chloe Haimson

- Benjamin Buka: “Historic Exclusion and Contemporary Expansion: Sundown Towns and Prison Construction in the U.S.”
 - Julian Cohen: “Humanizing Defendants: Mitigation Specialists in the American Legal System.”
 - Benjamin Ringel: “It’s Nice to Pass a Bill, But Then What?”: Debt-Related Incarceration & The Conditions for Durable Reform in Rhode Island”
 - Manav Musunuru: “Stigma in the Statehouse: How Lawmaker Attitudes Shape Harm Reduction Policies”
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10:25 **Panel 6: Between Promise and Practice: Development, Governance, and Lived Experience**

Faculty Moderator: Veronica Ingham

- Marcelo Rodriguez Parra: “Contesting the Washington Consensus: The Limits of Post-Neoliberal Reform in Bolivia and Peru”
 - Bisola Folarin: “Aid Us or Leave Us: The Relationship between Security Aid and Violence against Civilians in Africa”
 - Camila Murillo: “Not for Sale: Costa Rica’s Nature Brand and the Touristification of Santa Teresa, Tamarindo, and Nosara”
 - Salma Eldeeb: “Between Policy and Practice: Healthcare Providers and Refugee Health Governance in Cox’s Bazar”
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11:30 **Panel 7: Nationalism, Identity, and the Politics of Belonging**

Faculty Moderator: Tiraana Bains

- Ela Snyder: “Hindutva in India’s Southern Peripheries: the State of Secular Federalism in Tamil Nadu”
 - Marisa Coghlin: “The Self-Employed Women’s Association and Intercommunal Conflict: How SEWA Responded to the Violence in 2002 Gujarat”
 - Maize Cline: “Reproducing Occupation: Pronatalism, Health Care, and the Construction of Israeli Nationalism”
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12:30 **Closing Remarks**

Followed by lunch and reception