



2026–2027

NEW FACES

We are pleased to introduce the new faculty, postdocs, students, and staff arriving in the Division of the Humanities and Social Sciences for the 2026–2027 academic year. Please join us in welcoming them all to HSS!

PROFESSORIAL FACULTY

ALEXANDER BLUM

*Professor
of History*

Blum studies the history and philosophy of modern physics, with an emphasis on the postwar period. He has written and edited several books, including a sourcebook on the earliest efforts to bring together quantum theory and general relativity and a monograph on Werner Heisenberg's attempts at constructing a final theory in the 1950s. His current book project examines the debate over whether quantum field theory is already (or can be turned into) a consistent mathematical framework. Blum completed a PhD in theoretical particle physics at the Max Planck Institute for Nuclear Physics in Heidelberg and then retrained as a historian at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin, where he led a research group for nearly a decade before joining HSS.



PRAKASH MISHRA

*Assistant Professor
of Economics*

Mishra specializes in environmental economics, trade, and industrial organization. His research focuses on preserving and valuing environmental services without undercutting economic development, using global- or continent-scale data to inform empirical answers to hard policy trade-offs. His recent projects consider carbon taxes, international environmental agreements, land conservation, and offset market design as tools for sustainable development. After receiving a PhD in applied economics from the University of Pennsylvania, Mishra spent a year as the Globalization Postdoctoral Fellow at Dartmouth College.



LECTURERS AND OTHER FACULTY



GRACE FRANKLIN

Lecturer in Writing

Franklin earned her PhD in English earlier this year from the University of Southern California, where her dissertation examined coal-gas infrastructure in Victorian literature and culture. Her research sits at the intersection of energy humanities, Victorian studies, and digital humanities. Her published work, which traces the material and metaphorical history of “gaslighting,” has appeared in *Victorian Studies* and is forthcoming in *Victorian Periodicals Review*. She will bring her experience teaching college writing at USC to her work teaching two sections of the undergraduate course Introduction to Academic Writing in the fall.



DMITRI LEVITIN

Francis Bacon Visiting Professor of History

Levitin studies the intellectual, cultural, and religious history of early modern Europe and its relationship with the wider world. He holds a PhD in history from the University of Cambridge and is currently a research fellow at Oxford’s All Souls College and a fellow of the Royal Historical Society. His awards include the inaugural Leszek Kołakowski Prize (2016) and the Dan David Prize (2025). Having previously visited HSS in 2022–2023 to collaborate with faculty in the Research Institute for the History of Science and Technology (RIHST), he returns this spring to teach an undergraduate course and co-organize the next Francis Bacon Conference.



RYAN SKOPHAMMER

Lecturer in Writing

Skophammer is a biologist and educator with a PhD in molecular cell and developmental biology from UCLA. He spent over a decade at Westridge School in Pasadena, where he taught a range of science courses, including AP Biology and Ecology and Evolution. His recent publication in *Ecology and Evolution* reports on yEvo, an innovative pedagogical project he co-founded in which students evolve drug-resistant yeast in order to learn about genetics and evolution. Earlier in his career, he taught first-year writing at Whittier College. He will draw on his background teaching writing to novice scientists in his role teaching two sections of the undergraduate course Introduction to Academic Writing in the fall.



SHEEL TYLE

Lecturer in Economics

Tyle is an investor and entrepreneur who received his undergraduate degree from Stanford and a JD from Harvard Law School. As founder and co-CEO of Collective Global, an investment firm spanning early-stage, venture growth, and GP stakes investing, Tyle brings practitioner expertise directly relevant to his fall course, Law, Finance, and Power in Startups (BEM 113). His governance experience includes board roles with the Society for Science and the JFK Library Foundation, as well as an ownership stake in the Portland Trail Blazers.

POSTDOCTORAL SCHOLARS



JONATHAN FAY

Postdoctoral Scholar Research Associate in History and Philosophy of Science

Building on his background in natural sciences and physics, Fay completed his PhD in philosophy of gravitation at the University of Bristol earlier this year. His research at Caltech will explore the “low watermark” period in the development of general relativity (roughly 1925–1955), examining why a strong rationalist tradition emerged in 1930s cosmology—not only in the work of Einstein but also among contemporaries such as Milne, Eddington, and Dirac and, later, in the steady-state tradition of Bondi, Gold, Hoyle, and Sciama. He will also assist in the research and preparation of upcoming volumes of *The Collected Papers of Albert Einstein*.



ZACHARY HALL

Postdoctoral Scholar Research Associate in History and Philosophy of Science

Hall is interested in history, philosophy of physics, and the history of philosophy, particularly the critical philosophy of Immanuel Kant and various post-Kantian figures. He holds a PhD in philosophy from Stanford University, where he served as a teaching assistant for several courses. Prior to his time at Stanford, Hall taught high school mathematics for one year, and he developed user-interactive tools (using Java and Javascript) for learning about special and general relativity.



CLÉMENT HERMAN

Postdoctoral Scholar Research Associate in Experimental Economics

Herman comes to HSS from Princeton University, where he earned his PhD in economics and spent a year as lab manager for the Princeton Experimental Laboratory for the Social Sciences. His research lies at the intersection of political economy and behavioral economics, focusing on how collective decision-making and institutional structures shape interactions and conflicts. His recent work addresses the challenges of decision-making in information-rich environments, employing laboratory experiments to study search processes.



YI-FEI (JERRY) HU

Chen Postdoctoral Scholar Research Associate in Social and Decision Neuroscience

Hu will arrive in the division in the winter term as a postdoc to work with both the Camerer and Mobbs Labs. With a research background in the study of social perception using virtual reality techniques and a PhD in experimental psychology from Brown University, Hu is interested in studying how people learn social networks and use them to guide behaviors.

POSTDOCTORAL SCHOLARS



RAFAL KOCIELNIK

Postdoctoral Scholar Teaching Fellow in Science, Society, and Policy

Kocielnik began his appointment as part of The Ronald and Maxine Linde Center for Science, Society, and Policy (LCSSP) in the spring. He holds a PhD in human-centered design and engineering from the University of Washington, and his primary research interests include human-centered AI, human-AI alignment, and AI transparency and user empowerment. He previously held a postdoctoral role in the Computing and Mathematical Sciences department at Caltech, and most recently he served as an AI Research Scientist at Cedars-Sinai.



ROWAIDA MOSHRIF

Postdoctoral Scholar Teaching Fellow in Economic History

Moshrif's research interests center around historical political economy, land inequality, and the Middle East. She studies the long-run evolution of wealth and political concentration in Egypt over the last two centuries. Earlier this year, she completed her PhD in economics at EHESS, which is affiliated with the Paris School of Economics. Moshrif has worked with the World Inequality Lab, a global research center focused on the study of inequality and public policies that promote social, economic, and environmental justice.



STEPHAN SCHNEIDER

Postdoctoral Scholar Research Associate in Environmental Economics

Rooted at the intersection of political and environmental economics, Schneider's research addresses real-world issues such as scarce-resource allocation, natural disaster management, renewable energy, land use, migration, and political polarization. He holds a PhD in economics from ETH Zurich, where he received the ETH Medal for outstanding academic achievement in his doctoral thesis. He arrived at Caltech this summer after completing a postdoctoral position at Stanford University's Global Policy Laboratory.



SARAH SEARS

Weisman Postdoctoral Scholar Teaching Fellow in History

Sears studies modern Latin America and the American West, with a focus on the environmental history of northern Mexico. Her research investigates how the natural environment has factored into U.S.-Mexico diplomacy since 1848. After completing her PhD in history at UC Berkeley, Sears spent a year teaching at Reed College. At Caltech, her undergraduate classes will include Environmental (In)justice in Latin America (H 138) and Environmental History of U.S. Empire (Hum/H 3).

POSTDOCTORAL SCHOLARS



SHELLY SHI

*Ahmanson Postdoctoral Scholar Teaching Fellow in
Philosophy of Science*

Shi holds a PhD in philosophy and science studies from UC San Diego. Her primary interests are in space-time and the laws of nature, and she also investigates the metaphysics of meta-laws and symmetry principles. She is currently conducting archival research and interviews for a book project involving an intellectual biography of Chien-Shiung Wu and the 20th-century Chinese scientific diaspora. As a postdoctoral teaching fellow at Caltech, she will teach the courses Science and Pseudoscience (Hum/PI 17) and Philosophy of Space and Time (HPS/PI 124).

GRADUATE STUDENTS

MARIA ALEJANDRA FLOREZ ALVAREZ

*Social Sciences
Graduate Student*

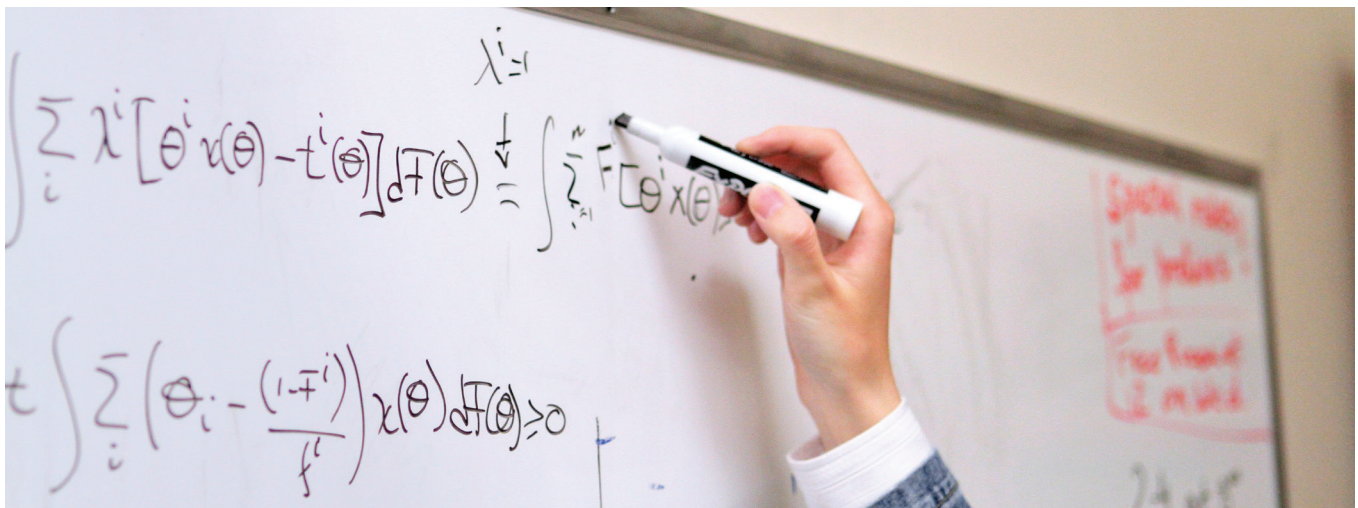
Alvarez is interested in decision theory, mechanism design, and applied microeconomics. She received a bachelor's degree in economics from the Autonomous Technological Institute of Mexico (ITAM). With a background in real analysis, she looks forward to learning more about experimental economics during her graduate studies at Caltech.



MENGXI LIU

*Social Sciences
Graduate Student*

Liu completed her bachelor's degree in economics at Shanghai Jiao Tong University earlier this year. She is interested in microeconomic theory, particularly decision theory, and questions related to human cognition. Her undergraduate research examined how past options can induce context effects that influence future behavior.



STAFF



LIZA BRADULINA

Division Option Manager

Bradulina joined HSS this summer to manage the administrative aspects of the Social Sciences and Social and Decision Neuroscience graduate programs and the Social Sciences undergraduate programs. Coming from the Lynn Booth & Kent Kresa Department of Aerospace (formerly known as GALCIT), where she worked since 2019, she has extensive experience with Caltech faculty and graduate students and with administrative groups and systems across campus.



SAMSON MUSUMURI

Data Scientist

Musumuri is a data scientist with the Einstein Papers Project, where he builds the technical infrastructure behind the latest edition of Einstein's collected papers. His work covers data pipelines for a collection of more than 100,000 archival documents, handwritten text recognition applied to Einstein's German manuscripts, and AI tools that help editors search and cross-reference the corpus. Before coming to Caltech, he received a master's degree in analytics and modeling at Valparaiso University in Indiana and worked for almost five years in data science, most recently at Clearway Health.



JOSHUA STALLINGS

Research Technician-Assistant

With a BS in computer science from Rice University and a background in software engineering, Stallings will conduct research at the intersection of machine learning and environmental economics and policy. His project with Hannah Druckenmiller and Georgia Gkioxari (EAS) leverages Earth observations and large administrative datasets to estimate spatially explicit monetary values of ecosystem services.



ANJALI VADDEPATY

Research Technician-Assistant

As an assistant research technician in the Adolphs Lab, Vaddepaty studies the mechanisms underlying decision-making and social cognition in autistic and neurotypical populations. Her research interests center on neuroplasticity associated with language and cognitive recovery in contexts of neurological conditions. She holds a BS in psychology and business, administration, and information systems from UC Riverside.



REMINDER

HSS Fall Welcome Party

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15
4:00 to 6:00 p.m. // Dabney Garden

HSS AT 60

Please join us as we celebrate 60 remarkable years since Caltech established the Division of the Humanities and Social Sciences in 1966, renaming its original Division of Humanities founded in 1926.

FRIDAY & SATURDAY
NOV 6 & 7 2026

Baxter Lecture Hall

Full schedule
and registration
at hss.caltech.edu/hss60

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 6 • 4:00 p.m.

Keynote Conversation

LEVIATHAN UNCHAINED: RETHINKING THE FRAMERS ON EXECUTIVE POWER

John Ferejohn, Samuel Tilden Professor of Law, Emeritus, NYU School of Law (HSS faculty 1972–1983), in conversation with **Jean-Laurent Rosenthal**, Rea A. and Lela G. Axline Professor of Business Economics.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7 • 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

A day of presentations and discussion as HSS alumni engage with current HSS faculty across four sessions celebrating the breadth of our expertise and its enduring relevance to society.

MAKING THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE: POLICY AND INSTITUTIONS

9:30 a.m.

- *Space Sustainability in the Era of Satellite Megaconstellations and Novel Space Activities* (**Roohi Dalal**, BS '18, American Astronomical Society)
- *Take Three: Attempts to Build Inclusive Infrastructures in Academia* (**Sera Linardi**, PhD '10, University of Pittsburgh)
- *Merit and Representation* (**Teddy Mekonnen**, postdoc 2017–2019, Brown University)

PERSPECTIVES ON FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY

11:00 a.m.

- *The Escapes of David George: Overcoming Slavery in Revolutionary America* (**Greg O'Malley**, postdoc 2007–2008, UC Santa Cruz)
- *ChatBot Democracy: The Power of Conversations* (**Betsy Sinclair**, PhD '07, Washington University in St. Louis)
- *The Art of Killing Time* (**Anna Stielau**, postdoc 2023–2025, OCAD)

READING THE ROOM: DATA, INFORMATION, AND STRATEGY

1:30 p.m.

- *The Upside-Down World of Political Advice* (**Catherine Hafer**, BS '93, New York University)
- *Not Infinitely Rational, Just a Few Steps Ahead: A Theory of Hierarchical Reasoning in Games* (**Po-Hsuan Lin**, PhD '24, University of Virginia)
- *The Use and Misuse of Data on Digital Platforms* (**Erik Madsen**, BS '11, New York University)

WHITHER THE UNIVERSITY?

3:00 p.m.

A roundtable discussion on challenges facing higher education with **John Brewer**, Eli and Edythe Broad Professor of History and Literature, Emeritus, Caltech; **Colin Camerer**, Robert Kirby Professor of Behavioral Economics; and **Susanne Hall**, Teaching Professor of Writing and Director of the Hixon Writing Center.



Program
Information

These events are free and open to the public.
Questions? hss@caltech.edu

Caltech



Register
for Events