

# Ariel Helfer

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## Employment History

Wayne State University, Associate Professor (2024-present)  
Wayne State University, Assistant Professor (2017-2024)  
Michigan State University, Assistant Professor–Fixed Term (2015-2017)

## Education

University of Texas at Austin, Ph.D. in Government, 2015  
University of Texas at Austin, M.A. in Government, 2013  
Kenyon College, B.A. in Political Science and Physics, 2008

## Books

*Plato's Letters: The Political Challenges of the Philosophic Life*  
Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2023

*Socrates and Alcibiades: Plato's Drama of Political Ambition and Philosophy*  
Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017.

## Journal Articles

“Socrates’ Political Legacy: Xenophon’s Socratic Characters in *Hellenica* I and II.”  
*Interpretation: A Journal of Political Philosophy* 45.1 (Fall 2018); pp. 25-47.

“Reply to Reviewers,” contribution to review symposium on *Plato's Letters* in *Interpretation: A Journal of Political Philosophy* vol. 41, no. 1 (Fall 2024)

## Book Reviews

“Plato in Syracuse.” Review of James Romm, *Plato and the Tyrant: The Fall of Greece's Greatest Dynasty and the Making of a Philosophic Masterpiece*. *Law and Liberty Journal*, June 5, 2025.

“Alcibiades in Technicolor.” Review of *Nemesis: Alcibiades and the Fall of Athens* by David Stuttard. *Review of Politics* 81.2 (April, 2019)

“Socrates on Courage, Self-Sacrifice, and the Divine.” Review of Robert C. Bartlett, *Sophistry and Political Philosophy: Protagoras' Challenge to Socrates*. *Law and Liberty Journal* January 29, 2018.

## Honors and Awards

National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship, 2026

*Yearlong research fellowship for work on "Isocrates and the Socratics" monograph*

M. Richard Zinman Visiting Scholar-in-Residence Fellowship, 2026

*Invited lecture and seminar series on Isocrates at Michigan State University's James Madison College*

National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship, 2019

*Yearlong research fellowship for work on "Plato's Letters" monograph*

President's Award for Teaching, Wayne State University, 2023

Marilyn Williamson Endowed Distinguished Professor Fellowship, 2025-26

*Yearlong research fellowship for work on "Isocrates and the Socratics" monograph*

WSU Humanities Center Resident Scholar, 2023-24

WSU Humanities Center Faculty Fellowship, 2023

*Funding for research toward publication of articles on political philosophy of Isocrates*

University Research Grant, Wayne State University, 2021

*Summer salary support for work on the philosophic rhetoric of Isocrates*

University Research Grant, Wayne State University, 2018

*Summer salary support for work on Plato's Letters manuscript*

Competitive GRA Award, Wayne State University, 2019-20

*Graduate student C. Raymond assigned as research assistant for work on Plato's Letters*

Graduate School Continuing Fellowship, University of Texas at Austin, 2014

Earhart Fellowship, University of Texas at Austin, 2012-2013

Jefferson Center Graduate Fellowship, University of Texas at Austin, 2010-2012

Malcolm Macdonald Fellowship, University of Texas at Austin, 2009-2010

John Chestnut Memorial Prize (Political Science), Kenyon College, 2008

Summer Science Scholarship, Kenyon College, 2006

Elbe H. Johnson Prize (Physics), Kenyon College, 2005

James P. Storer Scholarship, Kenyon College, 2005-2008

Distinguished Academic Scholarship, Kenyon College, 2004-2008

## Academic Service

### University

Wayne State University Research Grant Committee, 2023-24

Chair of Political Theory subfield committee, Wayne State University, 2017-present.

Member of Graduate Program committee, Wayne State University, 2017-2023

Member of Undergraduate Program committee, Wayne State University, 2023-present

Member of Political Science Selective Salary Committee, Wayne State University, 2020-present

### Conference

Co-Organizer of interdisciplinary Wayne State Plato Symposium (May 2021)

Section chair for "Foundations of Political Theory" at the 2020 MPSA Conference, Chicago, IL.

Panel Discussant: "The Natural and Political Science of Aristotle" at the 2024 APSA Conference in Philadelphia, PA.

Panel Discussant for "Polis and Psyche" at the 2024 MPSA Conference, Chicago IL

Panel Chair for “Tocqueville on the Modern Democratic Way of Life” at the 2024 MPSA Conference, Chicago, IL  
Panel Discussant for “Philosophic Education in Athens and Geneva” at 2023 MPSA Conference, Chicago, IL  
Panel Discussant for “Ancient and Modern Challenges to the Socratic Understanding of Politics” at 2022 MPSA Conference, Chicago, IL  
Panel discussant and chair for “The Socratic Response to the Limitations of Political Life” at 2021 APSA conference, Seattle, WA  
Panel discussant and chair for “Plato on Philosophy and Law” at 2021 APSA conference, Seattle, WA  
Panel discussant for “Theory and Practice in Platonic Political Thought” at 2018 MPSA conference, Chicago, IL  
Panel chair for “Aristotle’s Politics” at 2018 NPSA conference in Montreal, Canada.

### **Podcast Appearances**

*Historically Speaking with Al Zambone*, “Plato’s Letters: Ariel Helfer on the Political Challenges of the Philosophic Life” (December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2025)

*The New Thinkery*, “Ariel Helfer on Plato’s *Letters*” (June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023)

*Historically Speaking with Al Zambone*, “Episode 173: What’s the Good of Ambition, or Socrates and Alcibiades” (September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020)

### **Invited Speaking Engagements**

“The Philosopher as Political Advisor: Rediscovering Plato’s *Letters*,” delivered for the Government Department at the University of Texas at Austin on October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2024; for the Department of Political Science at Boston College on November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024; for the Department of Political Science at Louisiana State University on January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2025; for the Department of Philosophy at Tulane University on January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2025; for the Political Science Department at Kenyon College on March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025; and for the Ashbrook Center at Ashland University on March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2025.

“Isocrates and Plato: What ‘Philosophy’ Means in the Works of Isocrates,” delivered as part of the Joe R. Long lecture series for the Government Department at the University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX, November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022

“The Presentation of Philosophy in Plato’s *Letters*,” delivered as part of the LeFrak Forum’s lecture series at Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI, December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021

“Plato’s *Letters* as Epistolary Novel: A New Perspective on the Meaning of Platonic Political Philosophy” delivered to the Reubin O’D. Askew Department of Government at the University of West Florida, Pensacola, FL, April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2021

“Plato’s *Letters*: The Political Dangers of the Philosophic Life” delivered as a Political Science Colloquium Talk in the Department of Political Science at Wayne State University, Detroit, MI on April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

“On the Literary Character of Plato’s *Letters*” delivered as a lecture in the History of Philosophy Circle series in the Department of Philosophy at Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI on March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

“Ancient Philosophy vs. Modern Science: Why I Chose Plato over Physics” delivered to students and faculty of the Concourse program at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA on November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

“The Philosophic ‘Defense’ of Virtue: Socrates’ Adventures in Athenian Quicksand in Plato’s *Cleitophon* and *Republic*” delivered as an installment in the Political Philosophy Colloquium hosted by James Madison College and the Department of Political Science at Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI, on April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016.

### **Wayne State Teaching Experience (2017-present)**

#### *Courses Taught*

##### Graduate

Plato’s Political Philosophy—*Republic* (Fall 2017)

Aristotle’s Moral and Political Philosophy—*Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics* (Winter 2020)

Thucydides and Classical Political Thought—*History of the Peloponnesian War* (Winter 2022)

Plato’s Political Philosophy—*Gorgias* (Winter 2024)

The Political Philosophy of Aristotle—*Politics* (Winter 2026)

Modern Political Thought—Hobbes, Rousseau, and Nietzsche (Fall 2018, Winter 2021, Fall 2022, Fall 2024)

Stats and Data Analysis in Political Science 1 (Spring 2018)

##### Undergraduate

Introduction to Political Philosophy: What is Politics (Undergraduate)

*Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Marx, Nietzsche*

Classical Political Philosophy: What is Justice? (Undergraduate)

*Plato’s Republic*

Classical Political Philosophy: What is War? (Undergraduate)

*Thucydides’s History of the War of the Peloponnesians and the Athenians*

American Political Philosophy: What is Freedom? (Undergraduate)

*Founding debates, Philosophy of religious toleration, Tocqueville, African American political thought from abolition to civil rights*

Modern Political Philosophy: What is a Republic?

*Machiavelli, Montesquieu*

### *Reading Groups Organized and Led*

Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Graduate Reading Group, Winter 2018)

Machiavelli's *The Prince* (Graduate Reading Group, Fall 2018)

Xenophon's *Hiero* and Strauss's *On Tyranny* (Graduate Reading Group, Winter 2019)

Hannah Arendt's *On Revolution* (Graduate Reading Group, Fall 2019)

Historical and Contemporary African American Political Theory (Graduate Reading Group, Summer 2020)

Plato's "Seventh Letter" (Graduate Reading Group, Fall 2020)

John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* (Graduate Reading Group, Fall 2021)

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Plato's *Apology of Socrates* (Graduate Reading Group, Fall 2023)

Isocrates's *Panegyricus* (Graduate Reading Group, Winter 2025)

Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (Graduate Reading Group, Fall 2026)

Friedrich Nietzsche on History and Philosophy (Undergraduate Honors Reading Group, Fall 2017)

Plato's *Apology of Socrates* (Undergraduate Honors Reading Group, Winter 2018)

### **Introduction to Mathematics for Political Scientists (Organizer, Instructor)**

*"Math Camp" is a 1-to-2-week workshop in algebra, functions, calculus, linear algebra, and statistical inference for incoming graduate students, with additional advanced sessions*

2020-present—Wayne State University

2015-16—Michigan State University

2010-14—University of Texas at Austin

### **Theses and Independent Studies Directed**

Dominic Nanni, PhD Thesis in English

"Rhetoric and Pedagogy in Isocrates" (In progress)

David Joshua Faehner, Graduate Student PHD Thesis in Political Science

"Tocqueville and the Foundations of Liberal Democracy" (March 10, 2026)

David Joshua Faehner, Graduate Student MA Thesis in Political Science

"Tocqueville's Providence" (Fall 2020)

Chad Michael Dresden, Graduate Student MA Thesis in Political Science

"Liberal Democratic Theory and the Problem of Philosophic Anarchism" (Winter 2020)

Muna Tareh, Graduate Student Directed Study in Political Science

"The Philosophy of Rights in the History of Liberalism" (In progress)

Brenda Price, Graduate Student Directed Study in Political Science

"African American Political Thought from Douglass to Cornell West" (Fall 2021)

Hallisey Travers, Graduate Student Directed Study in Political Science

"Popular Consent and Constitutional Legitimacy" (Fall 2020)

Chad Michael Dresden, Graduate Student Directed Study in Political Science

"Machiavelli's Paradoxical Attack on Christianity" (Winter 2019)

Chantel Raymond, Graduate Student Directed Study in Political Science

"The Problem of Morality and Virtue in *The Prince*" (Fall 2018)

Marguerite Leonard, Graduate Student Directed Study in Political Science

- “American Utopias: Property Theory” (Fall 2018)  
 Dominic Nanni, Graduate Student Directed Study in Political Science
- “Nietzsche’s Philosophy of Music and his Critique of Richard Wagner” (Winter 2018)  
 Dylan Johnson, Undergraduate Political Science Honors Thesis
- “Eternal Recurrence and the Superman in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*” (Winter 2019)  
 Dalia Ibrahim, Undergraduate Peace and Conflict Studies Honors Thesis
- “A Philosophic History of the Idea of Human Rights” (Winter 2019)

### Articles in Preparation

- “*Eros and Eris: The Science of Love and the Love of Science in Isocrates’s Encomium of Helen.*” Presented at the annual meeting of the Northeastern Political Science Association in Philadelphia, PA, November 6-8, 2025.
- “Isocrates’s Defense of Philosophy: An Interpretation of Isocrates’s *Busiris.*” Presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association in Philadelphia, PA, September 4-8, 2024.
- “The Meaning of Philosophy for Isocrates” Presented at the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, IL, April 13-16, 2023.
- “Political Counsel in Plato’s *Letters*” Presented at the interdisciplinary Wayne State Plato Symposium, Detroit, MI, May 29-30, 2021
- “On the Importance of Plato’s *Letters: Rethinking the Doctrine of Philosophic Rule,*” Presented at the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Assn, Chicago, IL, April 4-7, 2019.
- “Measuring Learning in Informative Processes,” with Robert C. Luskin and Gaurav Sood. Presented at the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, IL, April 7-10, 2016.

### Selected Conference Presentations

- “Author Meets Critics: Roundtable on Ariel Helfer’s *Plato’s Letters: The Political Challenges of the Philosophic Life*” at the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago IL, April 4-7, 2024.
- “Philosophy in Plato’s Letter Six.” Presented at the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, IL, April 7-10, 2022.
- “The Platonic Enigmas of Letter Two: A Metaphysical Disguise for the Problem of Corruption,” Presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston, MA, August 30-September 1, 2018.
- “Plato’s double *apologia*: the Meaning of Letter Three as Illuminated by Plato’s *Laws.*” Presented at the annual meeting of the Northeastern Political Science Association, Montreal, Canada, November 8-10, 2018.
- “On the Character and Intention of Plato’s *Letters: Notes on Letters I, II, III, and XIII from Plato to Dionysius.*” Presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, San Francisco, CA, August 31-September 3, 2017.
- “The Philosophic Defense of ‘Virtue’: Socrates’ Adventures in Athenian Quicksand in

*Cleitophon* and *Republic*.” Presented at the annual meeting of the Northeast Political Science Association, Boston, MA, November 10-12, 2016.

“The Apology of Plato: Approaching the Platonic *Letters* as an Epistolary Novel.” Presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Philadelphia, PA, September 1-4, 2016.

“Ambition Corrupted and Intoxicated: Alcibiades’ Retrospective Speech in Plato’s *Symposium*.” Presented at the annual meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, Chicago, IL, April 3-6, 2014.

“Event Count Analysis vs. Item Response Theory: A Comparative Investigation,” with Tse-Min Lin, Etsuhiro Nakamura, and Dorothy Morgan. Presented at the Asian Political Methodology Meeting, Tokyo, Japan, January 6-7, 2014.

“Variations on the Extended Beta Binomial Distribution” with Tse-Min Lin and Dorothy Morgan. Presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Seattle, Washington, September 1-4, 2011.

### **Foreign Languages**

French (fluent); Ancient Greek (professional translation); German, Latin (intermediate)