

New Zealand Political Studies Association - Te Kāhui Tātai Tōrangapū o Aotearoa

Newsletter | Winter 2025

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Message from the President He karere nā Te Tumuaki



As we speed into the latter part of 2025, I hope you are all managing to stay on top of the many and varied tasks we're asked to complete as academics.

I am fortunate to be on sabbatical this semester, which will hopefully give me some time to catch up on the many half-finished or barely started pieces of research that have been accumulating over recent years. Timely completion of research, teaching, and administrative tasks is always going to be a juggling act in which some of the pieces occasionally get dropped, so it's important that we show understanding and support for colleagues as we navigate our increasingly complex and demanding workloads.

On that note, I am grateful to David Jenkins, Janine Hayward, and other members of the [NZPSA conference](#) team at Otago for being so organised at this point of the year. While still lower than pre-Covid days, we've had a very healthy number of submissions for the conference and organisation of the programme is now underway. If you or other non-members you know have neglected to get your submission in on time but would still like to attend, please [get in touch](#) with the team at Otago as they may still be able to accommodate additional papers. [Registration](#) is now also open, with early-bird pricing available up to 31 August.

Finally, please remember to nominate yourself or others for the various [essay or publication prizes](#) we have on offer this year. Acknowledging the great work of colleagues is one of the key functions of the NZPSA | TKTTOA but we need you all to let us know what to be reading! And if anyone is planning to attend the Australian Political Studies Association conference in late November, please let us know as you may be able to get free registration and dinner as an NZPSA representative.

Ngā mihi,

Jeremy

NZPSA | TKTTōA 2025 Biennial Conference Te Hui ā-Tau

Conference Theme: Political Hope

The University of Otago | Ōtākou Whakaihu Waka

19th – 21st November 2025

In an era characterised by a multiplicity of crises – for example, ecological crisis, right wing populism and widening inequalities – it is easy to lose hope. Indeed, the most hopeful people at the current moment might be either delusional – they have fundamentally misunderstood something – or dangerous – what is augured by the preeminent forces of the contemporary world do not bode well for our collective future. Yet hope – the sense that things can be better and that improvements are possible – has always been a necessary ingredient and driving force within social movements, whether this resulted in radical reform or revolutionary change. Indeed, without some amount of hope, what possible reason might people have to involve themselves in politics?

Registration for the conference is now open! Visit <https://nzpsa.co.nz/event/nzpsa-biennial-conference-2025/> to purchase your tickets.

Four accommodation options have been negotiated with nearby providers:

1. [Hayward College](#) are offering a **budget option** a mere 50-meter walk from the conference venue. Rooms are \$50 a night. It has shared bathroom facilities, but the rooms themselves are spacious and well-furnished. To book, please contact janine.hayward@otago.ac.nz.
2. [Aurora on George Motel](#), 5-minutes walk from the conference. Executive studios are available for \$190 per-night, and Luxury studios for \$210. In order to get this rate you will have to book direct over the phone on 03 477 7984 or 0800 737 378 and reference the 2025 Biennial Conference.
3. [Alexis Motor Lodge](#), 5-minutes walk from the conference. Studio units for \$170 per-night, 1-bedroom units for \$180, and 2 bedroom units for \$190. Bookings to be made by calling (+64) 03-471-7268 or 0800 425 394, or emailing stay@alexis.co.nz and referencing the conference.
4. [Dunedin Leisure Lodge](#), 20-minutes walk from the conference, but located near the Botanic Gardens. Standard-King rooms for \$265 per-night, and Standard-Twin for \$255. Both options include breakfast for two. Bookings can be made via the following [link](#).

Please note that while the formal submissions period for the conference has now closed, the organisers may still accept proposals at their discretion, so please contact conference@nzpsa.co.nz if you missed the deadline.

Undergraduate and Postgraduate Essay Prizes Ngā Whakawhiwhinga Tuhinga a ngā Tauria Tohu Paetahi, Tohu Paerua

At this year's conference, the NZPSA/TKTToA will award five prizes for the best Undergraduate and Postgraduate essays.

We would like to note that in the past some of these prizes have unfortunately gone unawarded due to a lack of nominations. Please do submit on behalf of yourself or your students - winning a prize might just give someone the motivation to engage in further academic pursuits!

The available prizes are:

- Undergraduate - best essay on Māori Politics submitted in a course at any Aotearoa New Zealand University (\$500).
- Undergraduate - best essay submitted in a course on Aotearoa New Zealand politics in a New Zealand University (\$500).
- Postgraduate Conference Prize for the best paper in the field of Aotearoa New Zealand domestic politics (\$500).
- Postgraduate Conference Prize for the best paper in the field of Environmental Politics and Policy (\$500).
- Postgraduate Conference Prize for the best paper in any other field of political studies (\$500).

Finally, the as-yet unawarded 'Publication Prize' for best peer-reviewed article or book chapter (published within the last two years) is also open to all members of the Association.

The publication in question must be authored/co-authored or edited/co-edited by at least one member of the NZPSA who can demonstrate a long-standing connection to Aotearoa New Zealand (the strength of which the judges have the discretion to determine).

Please nominate yourself or others for this award if there is a recent publication that you like or are proud of!

Nominations for all prizes must be submitted by 5pm 1st of November.

For more information about the prizes and the nomination process (including who to contact), [head here](#).

Position Available: Kairuruku | Postdoctoral Research Fellow

Te Herenga Waka - Victoria University of Wellington is [currently recruiting](#) a Postdoctoral Research Fellow for a one-year full-time post to work on an interdisciplinary research project: 'Power, Inequality and Housing in Aotearoa New Zealand'.

The project's aim is to explore systems of power and inequality in Aotearoa-New Zealand through the case of housing. It seeks to explore the wider causes of the country's housing crisis (unaffordability, homelessness, lack of social housing, rental conditions), by investigating the varied ways housing policy, regulation and taxation are shaped.

The Postdoctoral Research Fellow will provide research assistance on a number of tasks such as limited survey, interviews, collection and analysis/audit/coding of data and news and policy content, writing up and presenting findings. There will also be some teaching required during the year in an area of politics and/or communication.

The start date is ideally between November 2025 and February 2026, and the position is fixed-term for 12 months.

Close date for vacancy: 10 August 2025.

Contact details for vacancy: If you have any questions regarding this role please get in touch with the project lead: Professor Aeron Davis (aeron.davis@vuw.ac.nz).

News from the Networks He kawepūrongo nā Ngā Hononga

International Relations Network

The International Relations network is planning a session for postgraduates to present and discuss their research at the upcoming conference. If this is something you'd like to be a part of, please reach out to flynn.acworth@vuw.ac.nz. The network also encourages members to attend the conference, where we hope to have a good contingent of New Zealand's IR community. If you are looking for co-panellists, please email internationalrelations@nzpsa.co.nz or matthew.castle@vuw.ac.nz for help coordinating a panel submission.

Network Group Panels at the NZPSA | TKTToA Conference

We are asking all members interested in building/joining Network Group plenary panels at the upcoming conference to reach out!

Please contact Network Convenors at the following email addresses if you'd like to be involved in any conference panels:

- Ako/Learning and Teaching - claire.timperley@vuw.ac.nz
- Aotearoa New Zealand Politics - janine.hayward@otago.ac.nz
- Civics, Citizenship and Political Literacy - helena.cook@canterbury.ac.nz
- Environmental Politics and Policy - priya.kurian@waikato.ac.nz
- Gender and Politics - shirin@shirinbrown.co.nz
- International Relations - matthew.castle@vuw.ac.nz
- Political Communications - olli.hellmann@waikato.ac.nz
- Political Theory - s.winter@auckland.ac.nz

Alternatively, start a conversation on the [Member Forums](#) or the [Network Forums](#) of the NZPSA website!

PhD Corner



Barnaby Watts is six months into his PhD at the University of Otago, supervised by Assoc. Prof. Brian Roper and Dr. David Jenkins.

After an unprecedented upsurge in working-class struggle and interrelated protest movements in the 1970s, the last two decades of the 20th century in Aotearoa New Zealand saw a sweeping capitalist-class offensive. At the dawn of the new millennium, Aotearoa New Zealand was a country with greatly increased inequality, low rates of union membership, and a political economic system geared towards the enrichment of a select few at the expense of the majority.

Using a Marxist framework, my thesis aims to examine the ways in which workers and the oppressed have sought to turn the tide back in their favour in the last 25 years, through strikes, protests, land occupations, hīkoi, and much more. My research is, at its heart, an optimistic endeavour - what matters to me is not simply taking stock of the ways in which people are oppressed (this is of course a crucial part of the puzzle) but the ways in which they *resist* their oppression and exploitation. Thus, my research also centres on agency - it is one thing to point to changes we might think will make our society a better place, but it is another to demonstrate which groups in our society are materially empowered to bring about that change. For Marxists, of course, that agent is the working class, which is why their struggle is the centrepiece of my research.



Asha Thrishali is a doctoral student in Politics and International Relations at the University of Auckland. Prior to her PhD, she served as a Visiting Lecturer in the Department of International Relations at the University of Colombo, where she also completed her Master's in Conflict and Peace Studies and her bachelor's in international relations. She has also worked as a Teaching Assistant for the course *China and the World* at the University of Auckland.

Her research interests include Chinese politics, power dynamics in international relations, foreign policy, and Indo-Pacific studies.

Asha's PhD research explores China's power expansion through port investments in the Indian Ocean, focusing on the Colombo Port City (CPC) in Sri Lanka and Gwadar Port in Pakistan. Using the concept of social power, her study investigates how economic engagement, political relationships, and public and cultural diplomacy, which are identified as Independent Variable (causes) in the study, affect to build China's influence. Employing a comparative case study approach with Process Tracing (PT), she aims to identify the mechanisms through which China's actions manifest locally, testing hypotheses around economic dependency and diplomatic strategies.

Data is collected through document analysis—including official records, institutional reports, and media sources—using triangulation to ensure reliability. Her findings aim to bridge the gap between global and local dimensions of China's power-building strategies, offering insights into how port projects serve as instruments of building social power.