



HILLSDALE COLLEGE

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Hillsdale College Ph.D. Candidate Jessica Higa Presents Doctoral Research

Higa presented research from her dissertation on “War Power in the Political Thought of Salmon P. Chase”

HILLSDALE, Mich. — Hillsdale College doctoral candidate Jessica Higa gave a research presentation on her dissertation titled “War Power in the Political Thought of Salmon P. Chase” on Nov. 14. Chase entered politics defending fugitive slaves and ultimately served as chief justice of the Supreme Court from 1864-1873. Higa gave her presentation after successfully defending her dissertation before a faculty panel.

Higa said that war tests the relationship between necessity, justice, and the rule of law under the Constitution.

“For Chase, government being founded upon a natural-rights consent of the governed with the law of nature undergirding it made it so that all the government had to be limited in terms of its powers,” Higa said. “Yet at the same time necessity does not seem to know these limits — when it comes up in war especially.”

Higa considered two cases that tested the limits of the war power: emancipation and paper currency.

“You have an emergency situation where they really need to emancipate that’s making it possible for justice in this case to be served,” Higa said. “It brings the law towards justice, and there’s a tension between justice and law that’s being resolved, whereas [paper money] is a little bit messier because it’s the opposite. You have the law being brought what Chase understands to be farther from justice.”

Higa's dissertation chair was Adam Carrington, associate professor of political science at Ashland University and former associate professor of politics at Hillsdale College. The presentation took place in Lane Hall and was followed by a brief reception. Graduate Dean R.J. Pestritto provided introductory remarks.

"Jessica has written a very formidable dissertation," Pestritto said. "She used a deep study of two cases in particular, the case of emancipation and the case of monetary policy, in her attempt to show how Chase ordered the authority of natural law, law of nations, the positive law of the Constitution."

Higa received her Bachelor of Arts from Ave Maria University in 2015 and her Master of Arts from Hillsdale's Van Andel Graduate School of Statesmanship in 2017. Having successfully defended her dissertation, she will earn a Doctor of Philosophy in Politics and receive her diploma at Hillsdale College's Commencement Ceremony in May 2025.

For a headshot of Higa, click [here](#). For Higa's student profile, click [here](#). To view the poster for the event, click [here](#).

For a high-resolution copy of the Hillsdale College clocktower logo, click [here](#).

About Hillsdale College Graduate School of Statesmanship

The Van Andel Graduate School of Statesmanship was founded in 2010 "to educate students in the language of American constitutionalism and to place its graduates in positions of public service in politics, in journalism, in the Academy, and elsewhere." Its courses of study, which culminate in either a Master of Arts or a Doctor of Philosophy in Politics, are centered around the core texts from the Western and American traditions of political thought — what Thomas Jefferson called the "elementary books of public right." All admitted students received a full-tuition scholarship and admitted Ph.D. students receive an additional living stipend. For more information, visit gradschool.hillsdale.edu.

About Hillsdale College

Hillsdale College is an independent, nonsectarian, Christian liberal arts college located in southern Michigan. Founded in 1844, the College has built a national reputation through its classical liberal arts core curriculum and its principled refusal to accept federal or state taxpayer subsidies, even indirectly in the form of student grants or loans. It also conducts an outreach effort promoting civil and religious liberty, including a free monthly speech digest, *Imprimis*, with a circulation of more than 6.6 million. For more information, visit hillsdale.edu.

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