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11-9-2022

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Recommended Citation

Smith, Edwin B., "Researcher Leads Study of How Leaders Respond to Crises" (2022). *University of Mississippi News*. 7228.

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Researcher Leads Study of How Leaders Respond to Crises

Gregory Love receives federal grant for collaborative project

NOVEMBER 9, 2022 BY EDWIN B. SMITH

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A team of researchers headed by UM political science professor Gregory Love is working to understand which aspects of crises shape support for political leaders and the stability of governments. The project is supported by a grant from the National Science Foundation. Adobe stock photo

OXFORD, Miss. – Understanding how elected leaders respond to crisis situations, and how voters judge them for their responses, can provide clues to a nation’s political stability and the accountability of its leaders. That’s the goal of a study headed by a **University of Mississippi** researcher, with support from the **National Science Foundation**.

UM political science professor Gregory Love, the project’s principal investigator, is working with colleagues at Georgia State University, Indiana University and the universities of Connecticut and North Carolina.

“When a country enters into a crisis, we often view it as a unique and rare period of time,” Love said. “But crises are actually pretty normal. In the U.S. alone, in the past 20 years, we have seen major security crises, natural disasters, financial crises and now a major public health crisis.

“In many ways, for national governments, crises are not special; they are an everyday occurrence.”

While crises may be fairly common, they are also very different in their causes, consequences and how leaders approach mitigating their effects, he said. The project’s central goal is to understand which aspects of crises shape support for political leaders and the stability of governments.

“The project aims to understand when citizens reward or punish their democratically elected leaders for the causes and consequences of different types of crises,” Love said. “This project moves beyond our current public health crisis to understanding how severe periods of disruption and uncertainty caused by pandemics, natural disasters, violence or economic crisis affect political support for leaders.

“In particular, we are using machine learning approaches to analyze how leaders communicate with the public during these crises and how the public responds.”

This includes collecting more than 1 million newspaper articles from around the world and analyzing how crisis coverage may have influenced voting outcomes. The project also will continue and expand a research project Love has been involved with for the last 12 years: the Executive Approval Project.

That project, which the multi-university collaboration has been working on for over a decade, found female political executives are evaluated differently than their male counterparts. Also, political scandals

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Campus Briefs

Donations Sought for 25th Annual Books and Bears Program

OXFORD, Miss. – The University of Mississippi is asking the community to help spread a little joy this holiday season by donating to the 25th annual Books and Bears program. Donations such as toys, books, dolls, bicycles and other children’s play items are being accepted through Dec. 14. All donations will be collected and sorted

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Mayo Lab to Help Combat Substance Misuse, Mental Health Issues

OXFORD, Miss. – Thomas Hayes Mayo, a 21-year-old University of Mississippi student, loved his friends and college life. Described as “a great friend that lit up every room he entered” by fellow students, he died April 14, 2022, from fentanyl poisoning. “Thomas always wore a smile and appeared full of endless joy,” said his dad,

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Ole Miss In the News

Clarion-Ledger: New Essay Collection Tells the Story of Meredith’s Enrollment

Essays celebrate 60th anniversary of James Meredith’s enrollment at University of Mississippi By Lauren Rhoades Oct. 1 marks the 60th anniversary of James Meredith’s 1962 enrollment at the University of Mississippi as the school’s first African-American student. “James Meredith: Breaking the Barrier,” a

affect elected officials' time in office differently depending upon the state of the economy

"We've been collecting over 70,000 public opinion polls from across the globe to understand how citizens evaluate their leaders," he said. "The grant will allow us to hire research assistants to continue and expand this data collection effort."

Another key part of the work being done at Ole Miss is conducting surveys in five countries: Mexico, France, Italy, Brazil and the United States.

"These experiments will be the first to tap into what it is about crises that shapes public opinion," Love said. "Crises are not single events about a single issue – they have all sorts of impacts and are shaped by the stories we tell about each crisis. We hope to untangle these different causes and consequences."

Love has an established record of strong accomplishments in his research, said John Bruce, UM professor and chair of the **Department of Political Science**.

"This project is the next piece of that record," Bruce said. "The political crisis project is a major project, and reflects well on the accomplishments of Dr. Love while also helping drive the reputation of department around the nation."

The study, "Varieties of Crises, Elite Responses and Executive Approval," runs through June 30, 2024. It is funded by the NSF's Accountable Institutions and Behavior program and the Build and Broaden program, which is designed to increase research capacities at minority-serving institutions and expand research links between such institutions and other research universities.

The project aims to broaden training and research opportunities for scholars not often integrated into large research projects.

For more information about the project, click [here](#).

This project is supported by the NSF under Grant No. 2116484. Any opinions, findings and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the NSF. For additional information about the award, visit [here](#).



Gregory Love

collection of essays edited by UM professor of journalism Kathleen Wickham, honors this historic milestone with

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