

# Michael E. Shepherd, Ph.D.

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## Academic Appointments

**University of Michigan, School of Public Health, Department of Health Management & Policy**

Assistant Professor, 2024-present

**University of Michigan, Department of Political Science**

Assistant Professor (by courtesy), 2024-present

**University of Texas at Austin, Department of Government**

Assistant Professor, 2022-2024

**University of Texas at Austin, Health & Society Program**

Affiliated Faculty, 2022-2024

**Vanderbilt University, Department of Medicine, Health, and Society**

Postdoctoral Fellow, 2021-2022

**Vanderbilt University, Data Science Institute**

Teaching Faculty, 2021

## Education

Ph.D. Political Science, Vanderbilt University, 2021

Dissertation: *Unhealthy Democracy: How Partisan Politics is Killing Rural America*

Committee: Larry M. Bartels (co-chair), Joshua D. Clinton (co-chair), Allison P. Anoll, and Katherine J. Cramer (University of Wisconsin)

*Winner of the 2022 Best Dissertation Award, Class & Inequality Section, APSA.*

M.A. Political Science, Vanderbilt University, 2019

M.A.P. Applied Politics, The University of Akron, 2015

B.S. Political Science, Murray State University, 2013

*Summa Cum Laude*

Commonwealth of Kentucky Secondary Education Teaching Credential

## Book

1. (Forthcoming: August 2026). *Rural Pain, Republican Gain: How the Republican Party is Killing Rural America and Why Democrats are Blamed*. **University of Chicago Press**.

## Peer-Reviewed Articles

1. (Forthcoming). "Abortion Politics: Physician Mobilization in the Wake of the *Dobbs* Decision." (with Kelly Hunter, Hilary J. Izatt, Eve Bryner\*, and Alister Martin). *Journal of Health Politics, Policy, and Law*.
2. (Forthcoming). "Don't Take Your Guns to Town? Rural Socialization and the Long-term Politics of Firearms." (with Kristin Lunz Trujillo and Alea Lockman). *Journal of Health Politics, Policy, and Law*.
3. 2025. "Texas in the Rearview Mirror? How the Democratic Party Ignores Rural America and Underperforms in Elections." (with Clinton Willbanks<sup>◇</sup>). *Political Behavior*.  
*Media Attention*: Jacobin, The Nation.
4. 2025. "Measuring Disparities to Emergency Medicine with 200 Million Voter Records: The Case of Rural Hospital Closures." (with Derek Epp and Christian Cox). *Journal of Rural Health*.
5. 2025. "The Politics of Rural Hospital Closures." *Political Behavior*. 47: 915-961.  
*Media Attention*: The New York Times, USA Today, Health Medicine Network; MedicalXpress; Mirage News, DNYUZ.
6. 2025. "Access to Healthcare and Voting: The Case of Hospital Closures in Rural America" (with Derek Epp and Christian Cox). *American Political Science Review*. 119(3): 1233-1244.
7. 2025. "Physicians in Congress: Professional Backgrounds and Legislative Effectiveness." (with Daniel Skinner and Alexandra Fountaine<sup>◇</sup>). *Legislative Studies Quarterly*. 50(3): 1-19
8. 2025. "Racializing COVID-19: Race-related and Racist Language on Facebook, Pandemic Othering, and Concern about COVID-19" (with Jonathan Metzl, Tara McKay, and Priya Bhatt\*). *Political Communication*. 42(2): 286-305.
9. 2022. "The Politics of Pain: Medicaid Expansion, the ACA, and the Opioid Epidemic." *Journal of Public Policy*. 42: 409-435.
10. 2021. "The Politics of Locating Polling Places: Race and Partisanship in North Carolina Election Administration, 2008-2016" (with Joshua D. Clinton, Nicholas Eubank, and Adriane Fresh). *Election Law Journal*. 20(2): 155-177.
11. 2021. "Polling Place Changes and Political Participation: The Effect of Election Administration in North Carolina Presidential Elections, 2008-2016" (with Joshua D. Clinton, Nick Eubank, and Adriane Fresh). *Political Science Research & Methods*. 9(4): 800-817.
12. 2020. "The Effects of Big-City News on Rural Residents' COVID-19 Responses" (with Eunji Kim and Joshua D. Clinton). *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. 117(36):22009-22014.
13. 2020. "Exit Strategy: Career Concerns and Revolving Doors in Congress " (with Hye Young You). *American Political Science Review*. 114(1): 270-284.

\*Undergraduate Student; ◇ Graduate/Professional Student

## Book Reviews, Edited Volume Chapters, and Other Published Work

1. (In revision). Edited Volume Chapter. "Spatial Inequality and Economic Geography: The Geography of Wealth and Poverty in America." (with Hannah Lang<sup>◊</sup> and Olivia Rockwell<sup>◊</sup>). Chapter in *The Handbook of American Political Geography*. ed. Nicholas Jacobs. and B. Kal Munis. De Gruyter.
2. (In production). Edited Volume Chapter. "Biden, the Hand that Feeds You: The Contrasting Rural Economic Legacies of Presidents Biden and Trump." Chapter in *The Legacy of the Joe Biden Presidency*. ed. Michael Grossman and David B. Cohen. Palgrave.
3. 2026. Edited Volume Chapter. "Exploring The Rural-Urban Health Divide: Place-based Experiences and Attitudes." Chapter in *Rethinking Rural Politics: Place-Based Identity, Political Ideology, and Policy in Rural America*. ed. Nicholas Jacobs. De Gruyter.
4. 2025. Opinion column. "What Michigan communities need most from Rural Health Transformation Program." *Bridge Michigan*. October 22, 2025.
5. 2025. Opinion column. "Medicaid cuts will harm rural Republican communities most." (with Miranda Yaver). *The Hill*. June 2, 2025.
6. 2024. Review Article; "Who is the Rural Voter? A Review of *The Rural Voter: The Politics of Place and the Disuniting of America*"; by Nicholas F. Jacobs and Daniel M. Shea. Columbia University Press, 2023." *Political Science Quarterly*.
7. 2024. Opinion column. "Can Policy Make Rural Politics?" (with Jennifer Silva). *Jacobin* Summer 2024 Ed.
8. 2023. Book Review; *Ethically Challenged: Private Equity Storms US Health Care*; by Laura Katz Olson. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 2022. *Contemporary Sociology: A Journal of Reviews*. 52(4): 364-367.
9. 2020. Appendix Chapter. "The Public and the Electorate Before, During, and After the Civil Rights Movement." Appendix chapter in *His Truth is Marching On: John Lewis and the Power of Hope* by Jon Meacham. Random House: New York, 2020.
10. 2019. Opinion column. "Republicans face political risks on impeachment. But history shows not all is lost." (with Jon Meacham). *The Washington Post*. Dec. 18, 2019.  
Media Coverage: MSNBC.

\*Undergraduate Student; ◊ Graduate/Professional Student

## Working Papers

1. (Revised & Resubmitted). "Beyond Relief: The Lasting Legacy of New Deal Spending on the Geography of Government." (with Brian Hamel). *Journal of Politics*.
2. (Revised & Resubmitted). "The Evolving Role of Nonprofit Hospitals in Improving Community Health." (with Simone Singh). *Frontiers in Public Health*.
3. (Revise & Resubmit). "How Potential Policy Change Mobilizes Gun Owners." (with Chris Cassella). *Political Behavior*.
4. (Under Review). "Rural Health at a Crossroads: How Policymakers Have Failed Rural America and What Can Be Done for a Healthier Tomorrow."

5. (*Under Review*). "Hiding in plain sight: How physician-led "Get out the vote" efforts can diversify the electorate and influence policy ." (with Hilary J. Izatt, Kelly Hunter, Daniel Nielson, Katherine McCabe, Zoe C. Walker, Wylie Chang, and Alister Martin).
6. (*Under Review*). "Breaking down or charging up? Why place-based clean-energy manufacturing investments failed to generate a political return for the Democratic Party." (with Parrish Berquist).
7. (*Under Review*). "Angry Ballots and Long Lines: The Role of Emotions in Decisions to Mobilize in the Face of Voter Suppression." (with Hilary J. Izatt and Dan Magelby).
8. (*Under Review*). "Trump Elections and Mental Health." (with Bethany Albertson).
9. "Rural Roots: Place-based Socialization and Rural Conservatism." (with Kristin Lunz Trujillo and Alee Lockman).
10. "Varieties of Suburban Politics." (with Stephanie Ternullo and Dominic Skinnion).

## Work in Progress

1. *Growing Up Rural*. Book project (with Kristin Lunz Trujillo and Alee Lockman).
2. "Hard Row to Hoe: The Long-term Influence of Rural Childhood Socialization and Health Outcomes." (with Kristin Lunz Trujillo and Alee Lockman).
3. "Understanding Breast, Colorectal, and Prostate Cancer Experiences Among Groups with Geographic Access Barriers in Michigan." (with Micah Aaron and James Huynh).
4. "Nonprofit Hospitals Before and After the ACA and the OBBA." (with Simone Singh and Hannah Lang).
5. "Company Towns, Deindustrialization, and Health Outcomes." (with Elizabeth Mitchell Elder).

## Honors, Awards, and Fellowships

University of Michigan "Road" Scholars Fellowship, 2025.

Best Dissertation Award, Class and Inequality Section, American Political Science Association Annual Conference, 2022.

Timothy E. Cook Best Graduate Student Paper Award, Political Communication Section, American Political Science Association Annual Conference, 2020.

Best Graduate Student Paper Award, Department of Political Science, Vanderbilt University, 2020.

## Grants

1. 2025-2026: Co-Principal Investigator, Health Management Academy, "The Evolving Role of Nonprofit Hospitals." Principal Investigator: Simone Singh. (\$146,489 total).
2. 2025-2026: Co-Principal Investigator, Department of Health Management and Policy, University of Michigan (internal), "Understanding Breast, Colorectal, and Prostate Cancer Experiences Across Race and Place in Michigan." Co-Principal Investigators: Micah Aaron and James Huynh. (\$15,000 total).

3. 2025-2026: Co-Principal Investigator, Patients First Innovation Initiative, University of Michigan (internal), "Understanding Breast, Colorectal, and Prostate Cancer Experiences Across Race and Place in Michigan." Co-Principal Investigators: Micah Aaron and James Huynh. (\$15,000 total).
4. 2021-2024: Postdoctoral Researcher & Research Consultant, Commonwealth Fund, #20213323, "Addressing Beliefs About Race, Health, Community, and Ideology Regarding Coverage Expansion in the U.S. South." Principal Investigator: Jonathan Metzl. (\$398,812 total).

## Conferences and Invited Talks

American Political Science Association: 2018, 2019, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025.

Midwest Political Science Association: 2017, 2018, 2024, 2025, 2026.

Southern Political Science Association: 2020.

National Rural Health Association, 2026.

State of the Parties Conference (University of Akron), 2025.

Health Politics and Policy Conference (Dartmouth College), 2025.

The Political Economy of Geographic Polarization in Rich Democracies (Stanford University), 2025.

Consortium on the American Political Economy (Yale University), 2024 & 2025.

The Joe Biden Presidency: Legacy and Record (University of Mount Union), 2025.

Rethinking Rural Conference (Colby College), 2024.

Keeping the Republic Conference (Notre Dame), 2023.

Colleges and Universities: *Syracuse University* (2021); *University of Akron* (2022, 2023, 2024); *University of California, Berkeley* (2025); *University of Michigan* (2023); *University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill* (2021); *University of Oklahoma* (2021); *University of Texas, Austin* (2021); *Vanderbilt University* (2021).

Groups and Organizations: *Michigan Health and Hospital Association* (2025); *Michigan League for Public Policy* (2025); *Network for Responsible Public Policy* (2024); *Rural Urban Bridge Initiative* (2021).

## Media Appearances and Interviews

1. Hospitals and clinics are shutting down due to Trump's healthcare cuts. Here's where. By Carter Sherman. *The Guardian*. November 20, 2025.
2. States scramble to access \$50 billion rural health fund to offset Medicaid cuts. By Abigail Witt. *Cronkite News*. October 8, 2025.
3. US farmers are being squeezed - and it's testing their deep loyalty to Trump. By Luke Mintz. *BBC*. September 15, 2025.
4. Medicaid expansion boosted these Appalachian counties. Will cuts deliver an outsized hit?. By Chris Kenning. *USA Today*. September 4, 2025.
5. GOP Budget Threatens Rural Hospitals Across Several States. By Jasmine Laws. *Newsweek*. July 18, 2025.

6. Michigan Medicaid program faces \$15B hit as 'big beautiful bill' affects rural counties. By Apurva Mahajan, Ben Warren, and Melissa Nann Burke, *The Detroit News*. July 10, 2025.
7. Michigan rural hospitals at risk under Trump's 'beautiful' bill, experts say. By Lauren Gibbons and Robin Erb, *Bridge Michigan*. July 2, 2025.
8. Trump's True Colors, Revealed. By Thomas Edsall, *The New York Times*. July 1, 2025.
9. More than 300 rural hospitals face immediate closure threat as Senate Medicaid cuts loom. By Christopher Salas, *Hearst Television*. June 27, 2025.
10. Trump's Bill Slashes Safety Net That Many Republican Voters Rely On. By Jason DeParle, *The New York Times*. June 26, 2025.
11. Virginia hospitals bracing for Medicaid changes. By Emily Schabacker. *Cardinal News*. June 26, 2025.
12. Proposed Medicaid cuts could lead to thousands of deaths, study finds. By Kaitlin Sullivan, *NBC News*. June 16, 2025.
13. GOP senators uneasy about budget bill's rural health impact. By Lia DeGroot, *CQ-Roll Call*. June 2, 2025.
14. How 'Rural Studies' Is Thinking About the Heartland. By Emma Goldberg, *The New York Times*. June 29, 2024.
15. Bipartisan Congressional Caucus Addresses Payments to Rural Hospitals By Liz Carey, *The Daily Yonder*. December 11, 2023.
16. Trump promises to rescind Obama's signature health care law spurs Democratic criticism. By Reena Diamante, *Spectrum News*. December 5, 2023.
17. Rural Hospital Legislation's Long Wait in Congress. By Liz Carey, *The Daily Yonder*. November 14, 2023.
18. Rural Health Care Figures Prominently in 2023's Limited Political Races. By Liz Carey, *The Daily Yonder*. November 6, 2023.
19. Voting Rights Battles Move to States After Supreme Court Ruling. By Ryan Teague Beckwith, *Bloomberg News*. July 2, 2021.

## Profession, University, and Department Service

### Profession:

Social Media Co-editor, *Journal of Health Politics, Policy, and Law* (2025-present).

Scholars Strategy Network Affiliate (2025-present.)

Scholars Strategy Network Medicaid Working Group Leader (2025-present.)

APSA Health Politics & Policy Best Paper Award Committee (2025).

Discussant, Health Politics and Policy Conference, Dartmouth College (2025)

Discussant, Keeping the Republic Conference, Notre Dame University (2023).

APSA Class & Inequality Section Best Dissertation Award Committee (2023).

Discussant &/or Chair: APSA, MPSA, SPSA (2019-).

Referee for the *American Journal of Political Science*, *American Journal of Preventative Medicine*, *American Politics Research*, *British Journal of Political Science*, *Comparative Political Studies*, De Gruyter Books, *Emergency Medicine Australasia*, *Governance*, *Health Economics*, *Journal of Health Politics, Policy, and Law*, *Journal of Politics*, *Journal of Legislative Studies*, *Journalism*, *Perspectives on Politics*, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *Political Behavior*, *Political Geography*, *Political Research Quarterly*, *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*, *Representation*, Routledge Books.

University and Department:

Irene Butter Policy Analysis & Advocacy Training for Health (PAATH) Program Advisory Committee, University of Michigan School of Public Health, 2025-present.

Residential Masters Degree Committee, Department of Health Management & Policy, University of Michigan, 2025-present.

Health Policy Student Association, Lansing Day Advisor, University of Michigan, 2025-present.

Institute for Social Research, Faculty Associate, University of Michigan, 2025-present.

Center for Political Studies, Faculty Associate, University of Michigan, 2025-present.

Institute for Health Policy Innovation, Faculty Affiliate, University of Michigan, 2024-present.

UT Expert-Health Policy and Politics Expert Witness and Media Commenter, the University of Texas at Austin (2022-2024).

Archer Fellows Program, Faculty Selection Committee, University of Texas at Austin (2023-2024).

Faculty Connections Program, Faculty Mentor, University of Texas at Austin (2022-2024).

Policy Agendas Project, Faculty Affiliate, University of Texas at Austin (2022-2024).

Politics of Race and Ethnicity Lab, Faculty Affiliate, University of Texas at Austin (2022-2024).

## Teaching Experience

Social Science Quantitative Methods (G) - Fall 2025

Public Health Advocacy (UG) - Spring 2025

Rural Health Politics and Policy Reading Course (G) - Spring 2025

Gun Politics Reading Course (G) - Spring 2024

Mass Media & Democracy (G) - Spring 2024

Health & Society Capstone (UG) - Fall 2022, 2023

Rural Politics Reading Course (G) - Summer 2023

Mass Media & Democracy (UG) - Spring 2023

Current Approaches to Health & Society (UG) - Spring 2023, 2024

Politics of Health in the US (UG) - Spring 2022

Exploratory Data Analyses (G) - Fall 2021

Math Camp (G) - August 2016

## Advising Experience

### *Doctoral Committees*

Jenna Salzman (2025-present), committee member, University of Texas at Austin.  
Sujatha Changolkar (2025-present), committee member, University of Michigan.  
Heather Elliot (2024-present), committee member, University of Michigan.  
Betty Compton (2024-present), committee member, University of Texas at Austin.  
Seung Wook Ethan Yoo (defended 2025), committee member, University of Texas at Austin.  
Chris Cassella (defended 2025), committee member, University of Texas at Austin.

### *Master's Committees*

Allison Verrilli (2023-2024), committee member, University of Texas at Austin.  
Clinton Willbanks (2023-2024), committee member, University of Texas at Austin.

### *Senior Thesis Committees*

Jordana Hozman (2025), second reader, University of Chicago.  
Max Beard (2024), second reader, University of Texas at Austin.  
Jake Dring (2024), chair, University of Texas at Austin.  
Beril Saygin (2024), second reader, University of Texas at Austin.  
Dylan Shears (2024), second reader, University of Texas at Austin.  
Jenna Patton (2023), second reader, University of Texas at Austin.

## Advocacy/Community Engagement

Michigan Health and Hospital Association–Rural Health Task Force, 2025.  
Michigan Senate Appropriations Committee, Testimony on Medicaid and Rural Health. August 13, 2025.  
Office of Senator Raphael Warnock, Meeting on Medicaid and Rural Health. June 2025.  
Office of Representative Marc Veasey, Meeting on Medicaid and Rural Health. June 2025.  
Families USA, Meeting on Medicaid and Rural Health. June 2025.  
National Rural Health Association, Meeting on Medicaid and Rural Health. June 2025.  
Center for Health Care Strategies, Meeting on Medicaid and Rural Health. June 2025.  
Michigan's Children, Panel Discussion on Medicaid. April 2025.  
Michigan League for Public Policy, Panel Discussion on Economic Inequality. March 2025.

## Other Professional Experience

Founding Member, Rural-Urban Bridge Initiative, 2021-present.

Research Consultant, Jon Meacham, Nashville, TN, 2019-2021.

AP Visiting Fellow, AP Government Exam, Summer 2020.

Voter Protection Fellow, Tennessee Democratic Party, Nashville, TN, Fall 2018.

Campaign Researcher, Jim Cooper for Congress, Nashville, TN, Summer 2015.

Fundraising Executive, Kimberly Wood and Associates, Akron, OH, 2014-2015.

## References

Available upon request

Last updated: January 16, 2026