Michael E. Shepherd, Ph.D.

University of Michigan
School of Public Health
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Academic Appointments

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

John G. Searle Assistant Professor, 2026-*present*

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. 2026. *Rural Pain, Republican Gain*. **University of Chicago Press**.

   Media Attention: Against the Grain (podcast); CNN; Science of Politics (podcast); Times Higher Education.

Peer-Reviewed Articles

1. (*Forthcoming*)."Beyond Relief: The Lasting Legacy of New Deal Spending on the Geography of Government." (with Brian Hamel). ***Journal of Politics***.

2. (*Forthcoming*)."How Potential Policy Change Mobilizes Gun Owners." (with Chris Cassella$^{\diamond}$). ***Political Behavior***.

3. 2026. "Healthcare-led get-out-the-vote efforts as treatments for public health and democracy." (with Kelly Hunter, Hilary J. Izatt, Daniel Nielson, Katherine McCabe, Zoe C. Walker, Eve Bryner*, Wylie Chang, and Alister Martin). ***American Journal of Public Health***.

4. 2026. "Rural Health at a Crossroads: How Policymakers Have Failed Rural America and What Can Be Done for a Healthier Tomorrow." ***The Milbank Quarterly***.

5. 2026."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***.

6. 2026."The Effects of Recent Polarized Elections on Mental Health." (with Bethany Albertson). ***The Milbank Quarterly***.

7. 2026. "Don't Take Your Guns to Town? Rural Socialization and the Long-term Politics of Firearms." (with Kristin Lunz Trujillo and Alee Lockman). ***Journal of Health Politics, Policy, and Law***.

8. 2026."The Evolving Role of Nonprofit Hospitals in Improving Community Health." (with Simone Singh). ***Frontiers in Public Health***. 14.

9. 2026. "Texas in the Rearview Mirror? How the Democratic Party Ignores Rural America and Underperforms in Elections." (with Clinton Willbanks$^{\diamond}$). ***Political Behavior***. 48: 657-694.

   Media Attention: Jacobin, The Nation.

10. 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.***

11. 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.

12. 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.

13. 2025. "Physicians in Congress: Professional Backgrounds and Legislative Effectiveness." (with Daniel Skinner and Alexandra Fountaine$^{\diamond}$). ***Legislative Studies Quarterly.*** 50(3): 1-19

14. 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.

15. 2022. "The Politics of Pain: Medicaid Expansion, the ACA, and the Opioid Epidemic." ***Journal of Public Policy***. 42: 409-435.

16. 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.

17. 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.

18. 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.

19. 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, Book Chapters, and Edited Volume Chapters

1. (In production). Edited Volume Chapter. "Spatial Inequality and Economic Geography: The Geography of Wealth and Poverty in America." (with Hannah Lang◇ and Olivia Rockwell◇). Chapter in *The Handbook of American Political Geography.* ed. Nicholas Jacobs. and B. Kal Munis. De Gruyter.

2. (In production). Edited Volume Chapter. "The Working-Class Voter in the Trump-Era." Chapter in *The State of the Parties 10th Edition*. ed. John C. Green and David B. Cohen.

3. 2026. 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.

4. 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.

5. 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.*

6. 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.

7. 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.

***Undergraduate Student**; ◇ **Graduate/Professional Student**

Opinion Columns and Public Writing

1. 2025. "What Michigan communities need most from Rural Health Transformation Program." *Bridge Michigan*. October 22, 2025.
2. 2025."Medicaid cuts will harm rural Republican communities most." (with Miranda Yaver). *The Hill*. June 2, 2025.
3. 2024."Can Policy Make Rural Politics?" (with Jennifer Silva). *Jacobin* Summer 2024 Ed.
4. 2019."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.

Working Papers

1. (*Revise & Resubmit*)."Breaking Down or Charging Up? Why Place-based Clean-energy Manufacturing Investments Failed to Generate a Political Return for the Democratic Party." ***American Political Science Review***. (with Parrish Bergquist).
2. (*Revise & Resubmit.*) "The Elite Partisan Politicization of Medicine: Evidence from RFK Jr.'s Attack on Antidepressants." ***Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences***. (with Bethany Albertson).
3. (*Invited Submission*)."The Partisan Politics of American's Support for Global Health." (with Kelly Hunter). ***Social Science & Medicine***.
4. (*Invited Submission*)."The Evolving Partisan Politics of the Social Safety Net in Rural Areas." ***Rural Sociology***.
5. (*Under Review*)."The Waiting is the Hardest Part: Electoral Manipulation, Emotions, and the Paradox of Participation." (with Hilary J. Izatt and Dan Magelby).
6. (*Under Review.*) "The Medicaid Makeover: Program Names, Policy Feedback, and Political Mobilization." (with Miranda Yaver).
7. (*Under Review*)."Nonprofit Hospitals and the Post-OBBBA Federal Policy Landscape: Evidence from Interviews with Hospital Executives." (with Simone Singh and Hannah Lang).
8. (*Under Review*)."'The Place-Based Gender Divide on Guns and Firearms Policy in the US." (with Jennifer Silva).
9. "A Lasting Legacy of COVID-19: COVID Exposure and Political Correlates of Attitudes Toward Preparedness for Future Pandemics." (with Scott Greer, Praneetha Vissapragada, and Miranda Yaver).
10. "Rural Roots: Place-based Socialization and Rural Conservatism." (with Kristin Lunz Trujillo and Alee Lockman).
11. "The American Farmer Under Trump." (with Quinn Bornstein).
12. "A Hard Row to Hoe: The Long-term Influence of Rural Childhood Socialization and Health Outcomes." (with Kristin Lunz Trujillo and Alee Lockman).
13. "Varieties of Suburban Politics." (with Stephanie Ternullo and Dominic Skinnion).

Work in Progress

1. *The Politics of Mental Health*. Book project (with Bethany Albertson).
2. *Growing Up Rural*. Book project (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. "*Dobbs* and Depression: How Adverse Policy Change Influences Mental Health Utilization." (with Bethany Albertson).
5. "Measuring Non-Profit Health System's Community Benefit Programming." (with Simone Singh and Rahul Ladhania).

Honors, Awards, and Fellowships

University of Michigan Carnegie Fellowship Junior Faculty University Nominee, 2026.

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. 2027-2028. Principal Investigator, Russell Sage Foundation, "Working-Class Politics in an Era of Economic Uncertainty and Upheaval." ($74,394).
2. 2026-2028. Co-Principal Investigator, Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, "Transitioning through uncertainty: Assessing sociopolitical feedbacks from investments in the electric vehicle industry." With Parrish Bergquist, Sara Constantino, and Elizabeth Thom. ($750,000).
3. 2026-2027: Co-Principal Investigator, American Hospital Association,"Narrative Text Analysis of Hospital Community Benefits, Needs, and Impacts." Principal Investigator: Simone Singh. ($102,465).
4. 2025-2026: Co-Principal Investigator, Health Management Academy,"The Evolving Role of Nonprofit Hospitals." Principal Investigator: Simone Singh. ($146,489).
5. 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).
6. 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).
7. 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).

Conferences and Invited Talks

American Political Science Association: 2018, 2019, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026.

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

Southern Political Science Association: 2020.

Interdisciplinary Association of Population Health Sciences, 2026.

Health Politics and Policy Conference (MIT), 2026.

National Rural Health Association, 2026.

Ohio Presidential History and Politics Conference (University of Akron), 2026.

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

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

State of the Parties Conference (University of Akron), 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: *Harvard University* (2026); *Marquette University* (2027); *Syracuse University* (2021, 2026); *University of Akron* (2022, 2023, 2024); *University of California, Berkeley* (2025); *University of Florida* (2026); *University of Michigan* (2023); *University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill* (2021, 2026); *University of Oklahoma* (2021); *University of Texas, Austin* (2021); *Vanderbilt University* (2021, 2026).

Groups and Organizations: *Dialogue Vanderbilt* (2026); *Michigan Health and Hospital Association* (2025, 2026); *Michigan League for Public Policy* (2025); *Network for Responsible Public Policy* (2024); *Rural Urban Bridge Initiative* (2021).

Media Appearances and Interviews

1. The Doctors Are In: A Bigger, Bluer Physician Class Heads to a Divided Washington. By Debbie Koenig. Medscape. November 6, 2026.
2. As US midterms approach, farmers decide what to plant and how to vote. By Meg Duff. Aljazeera. October 29, 2026.
3. As maternity wards close, community outrage rises in key battleground states. By Amanda Becker. The 19th News. July 28, 2026.
4. Michigan rural hospitals are suffering, here's what happened. By Nick Monacelli. Local 4 Detroit (NBC). July 20, 2026.
5. Months after Mayo Clinic left, some rural towns adjust to a 'completely different health continuum' By Dene K. Dryden. Rochester Post Bulletin. July 4, 2026.
6. Americans now live longer in Democratic-held House districts. Here's why. By Ronald Brownstein and Edward Wu. CNN. June 28, 2026.

7. Trump's Game Plan to Win Back the Working Class. By Hugh Cameron. Newsweek. May 9, 2026.

8. Can the rise of right-wing populism be explained in one book? By Matthew Reisz. Times Higher Education. April 16, 2026.

9. Why rural areas vote Republican despite worse health outcomes. Science of Politics Podcast with Matt Grossmann. April 15, 2026.

10. 10 Virginia hospitals listed as 'at risk,' but what does that really mean? By Emily Schabacker. Cardinal News. April 13, 2026.

11. New rural health fund offers little relief from federal Medicaid cuts, experts say. By Alyssa Burr. The Michigan Independent. March 11, 2026.

12. How Idealizing Dangerous Reforms will Cripple Rural Health. Rural Health Today Podcast. February, 2026.

13. Hospitals and clinics are shutting down due to Trump's healthcare cuts. Here's where. By Carter Sherman. The Guardian. November 20, 2025.

14. States scramble to access $50 billion rural health fund to offset Medicaid cuts. By Abigail Witt. Cronkite News. October 8, 2025.

15. US farmers are being squeezed - and it's testing their deep loyalty to Trump. By Luke Mintz. BBC. September 15, 2025.

16. Medicaid expansion boosted these Appalachian counties. Will cuts deliver an outsized hit?. By Chris Kenning. USA Today. September 4, 2025.

17. GOP Budget Threatens Rural Hospitals Across Several States. By Jasmine Laws. Newsweek. July 18, 2025.

18. 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.

19. Michigan rural hospitals at risk under Trump's 'beautiful' bill, experts say. By Lauren Gibbons and Robin Erb, Bridge Michigan. July 2, 2025.

20. Trump's True Colors, Revealed. By Thomas Edsall, The New York Times. July 1, 2025.

21. More than 300 rural hospitals face immediate closure threat as Senate Medicaid cuts loom. By Christopher Salas, Hearst Television. June 27, 2025.

22. Trump's Bill Slashes Safety Net That Many Republican Voters Rely On. By Jason DeParle, The New York Times. June 26, 2025.

23. Virginia hospitals bracing for Medicaid changes. By Emily Schabacker. Cardinal News. June 26, 2025.

24. Proposed Medicaid cuts could lead to thousands of deaths, study finds. By Kaitlin Sullivan, NBC News. June 16, 2025.

25. GOP senators uneasy about budget bill's rural health impact. By Lia DeGroot, CQ-Roll Call. June 2, 2025.

26. How 'Rural Studies' Is Thinking About the Heartland. By Emma Goldberg, The New York Times. June 29, 2024.

27. Bipartisan Congressional Caucus Addresses Payments to Rural Hospitals By Liz Carey, The Daily Yonder. December 11, 2023.
28. Trump promises to rescind Obama's signature health care law spurs Democratic criticism. By Reena Diamante, Spectrum News. December 5, 2023.
29. Rural Hospital Legislation's Long Wait in Congress. By Liz Carey, The Daily Yonder. November 14, 2023.
30. Rural Health Care Figures Prominently in 2023's Limited Political Races. By Liz Carey, The Daily Yonder. November 6, 2023.
31. 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:

Health, Education, and Social Policy Section Chair, Midwest Political Science Association Conference (2027).

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

Scholars Strategy Network Affiliate (2025-*present*.)

Discussant, Copenhagen Money in Politics Conference, Copenhagen Business School (2026).

Discussant, Health Politics and Policy Conference, MIT (2026)

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 and MPSA (2019-).

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

Advocacy/Community Engagement

Center for Health Care Strategies, Board of Trustees, 2026-*present*.

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.

Courses Taught

Revitalizing Rural America: Place, Politics, and Policy (U)

Doctoral Seminar in Health Services and Systems Research II (G)

Exploring Community-based Public Health Settings (U)

Social Science Quantitative Methods (G)

Public Health Advocacy (UG)

Rural Health Politics and Policy Reading Course (G)

Gun Politics Reading Course (G)

Mass Media & Democracy (G)

Health & Society Capstone (UG)

Rural Politics Reading Course (G)

Mass Media & Democracy (UG)

Current Approaches to Health & Society (UG)

Politics of Health in the US (UG)

Exploratory Data Analyses (G)

Advising Experience

Doctoral Committees

Spencer Allen (2026-present), committee member, University of Michigan.

Jenna Salzman (2025-present), committee member, University of Texas at Austin.

Olivia Rockwell (2025-present), co-chair, University of Michigan.

Betty Compton (2024-present), committee member, University of Texas at Austin.

Sujatha Changolkar (defended 2026), committee member, University of Michigan.

Heather Elliot (defended 2026), committee member, University of Michigan.

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.

References

Available upon request