

Melissa McKay, Ph.D.

Engaged multidisciplinary instructor focused on student success through active learning and student engagement. International Relations research interests rooted in concepts of human rights and atrocity, focused on international conflict, transitional justice, accountability, and victim and witness involvement in justice. Advocate for shared governance and focused on institutional policy formation, collaboration, and execution.

Education

2019 - Doctor of Philosophy – Political Science - University of North Texas

Fields: International Relations, Comparative Politics and Law

Dissertation title: *“Making it Personal – The Psychological Lifecycle of Witnessing Before the ICTY”*

2016 - Master of Arts – Political Science - University of North Texas

Fields: International Relations, Comparative Politics and Law

2011 - Graduate Certificate – Advanced International Affairs - Texas A&M University

2008 - Bachelor of Arts – International Studies - University of North Texas

Research Interests

- Theoretic and practical application of United Nations mechanisms of accountability
- Accountability expectations of state agents and non-state actors during and post-conflict
- Psychological impact of testifying before international tribunals
- Analyses of accountability and responsibility for human rights violations and violations of humanitarian law
- Impact of socioeconomics, gender, and ethnicity on post-conflict reconciliation
- Historical perspectives and impact of mass atrocity, genocide, and human rights abuses
- Domestic and international human and civil rights and International Humanitarian Law

Research Experience

- **Victims and Witness experience survey (2014-2015)** – data operationalization and analysis, systematic coding, data visualization
 - Research assistant for collaboration between the Victims and Witness Services Unit at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the Castleberry Peace Institute at University of North Texas
 - Applied research can be found in these scholarly books:
 - King, Kimi L. and Meernik, James (2017) *The Witness Experience: Testimony at the ICTY and Its Impact*. Cambridge University Press.
 - Meernik, James D. and King, Kimi (2019) *Judging Justice: How Victim Witnesses Evaluate International Courts*. University of Michigan Press.
- **Tribunal Sentencing Dataset** - Systematically researched and coded appellate transcripts from trial records of international criminal tribunals to assist in the creation of a database for normalized sentencing across several conflict-related tribunals.

Academic Appointments

Administration

Academic Affairs Fellow – Office of Provost, Academic Affairs, University of North Texas

June 2025 – current

- Selected to lead a year-long comprehensive overhaul of UNT's Academic Integrity Policy for both faculty and students by coordinating input from diverse stakeholders including faculty, administrators, students, and staff to ensure alignment with institutional priorities and student-first processes.

Academic Integrity Officer – Office of the Provost, Academic Affairs, University of North Texas

June 2025 - current

- Lead university academic integrity efforts, combining case management authority with student-centered support and education. Lead efforts to emphasize prevention and mitigation of student violations over punitive consequences. Point of contact for all faculty and academic integrity officers for support and facilitation of department-level efforts.

Associate Chair – Department of Multidisciplinary Innovation, University of North Texas

August 2021 – December 2023

- Assisted Department Chair with the daily operation and ongoing administration of a 22-member multidisciplinary faculty department.
- Worked in collaboration with multidisciplinary faculty, staff, and university administration to provide resources necessary for advanced project, service, and team-based learning opportunities.
- Coordinated course scheduling, faculty scheduling, and conducted annual faculty evaluations.
- Supported the professional development of multidisciplinary project-based department faculty.
- Planned, organized, and facilitated monthly department meetings.
- Planned, organized, facilitated and often presented in-person monthly department lunch-and-learn workshops delivering professional development, departmental training, legislative updates, and other relevant information to department faculty.

Program Director – Applied Project Design and Analysis

University of North Texas

April 2021 – January 2022

- Established required elements for a new degree program offered at New College, a college within University of North Texas (now known as Department of Multidisciplinary Innovation).
- Planned sequencing of courses and schedule of classes to be offered.
- Established learning objectives and goals for each course required for the degree program.
- Oversaw students admitted to the degree program.
- Oversaw faculty assigned to teach courses within the program.
- Managed all aspects of degree program creation and implementation through institutional and state standards.

Faculty Governance

Vice Chair, Faculty Senate

June 2025 - present

- Elected by peer senators in Spring 2025 as officer of the faculty senate.
- Represent faculty senate members and all UNT faculty interests at the institutional level, advocating for faculty interests with university administrators and other decision makers.
- Represent UNT Faculty Senate at the Texas Conference of Faculty Senators twice each academic year.
- Chair of the Faculty Senate Executive Committee

Faculty Senate Executive Committee Member

August 2023 - present

- Elected by senate members to represent voting group within the Executive Committee.

Member, Faculty Policy Oversight Committee

2024- present

- Committee responsible for ensuring relevance, accuracy and consistency across faculty-related institutional policies, with the goal of advocating for consistent and equitable outcomes for faculty.

Chair, Committee on Committees

2022 – 2024

- Elected by committee members.
- Managed committee charged with oversight of senate committee vacancies, elections, charges, as well as determining efficiencies within committees.

Faculty Senator – University of North Texas Faculty Senate

2021 – present

- Elected by university faculty to represent their interests with the Faculty Senate.

Teaching Experience

University of North Texas –

From Fall 2020 – Fall 2025 taught in dual credit closed-cohort project-based learning community wherein each semester is uniquely tailored across four core curriculum courses and around a specific “wicked problem”:

- US Constitution and Institutions
 - Fall 2020 - Wicked project theme, “Transformation: How can we adapt to a changing society?”
 - Fall 2021- Wicked project theme, “How can public education respond to the most pressing problems facing schools today?”
 - Fall 2022 - Wicked project theme, “How can Texas schools better serve students of today?”
 - Fall 2023 - Wicked project theme, “What can be done to address issues around public food policies and conflicts?”
 - Fall 2024 - Wicked project theme, “What does the ethical use of AI look like?”

- US Political Behaviors and Policy
 - Spring 2021 – Wicked project theme, “What can the public do to address climate change?”
 - Spring 2022 – Wicked project theme, “What does gender inequality look like and how can it be addressed?”
 - Spring 2023 – Wicked project theme, “How will food define Texas in the next ten, fifty, two hundred years?”
 - Spring 2024 – Wicked project theme, “Citizenship: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly”
 - Spring 2025 – Wicked project theme, “Stepping Out of Line – Challenging Conformity and the Status Quo in the US” (semester project coordinator)

Additionally tasked with creating and teaching the following courses available to all students at University of North Texas:

- US Political Behavior and Policy – Spring 2018, Fall 2018, Spring 2019, Spring 2020
- Introduction to Political Research Methods, Spring 2020
- International Human Rights – Spring 2020
- International Relations – Fall 2021
- Introduction to Peace Studies – Summer 2017 (as Teaching Fellow), Spring 2022
- Project Design and Analysis senior capstone – Spring 2021
- Project Design and Analysis Cultural Contexts and Connections – Fall 2022
- Pathways to Civic Engagement – Fall 2024

University of North Texas at Dallas – Dallas, TX

- International Human Rights – Fall 2019, Fall 2020 (cancelled due to COVID)

Texas Woman’s University – Denton, TX

- State Politics and Government – Fall 2018, Spring 2019

Collin College – McKinney, TX

- Texas Government – Fall 2019, Summer 2020
- Federal Government – Fall 2019, Spring 2020

Platforms of proficiency:

- ACUE Certified in evidence-based engaged and active classroom pedagogies
- Currently in GAIT (GenAI training)
- Expert in project-based learning pedagogies
- Expert in active-learning pedagogies
- Expert service-learning pedagogies
- Classroom, in-person instruction (8-300+ students)
- Canvas LMS – both fully online course instruction as well supporting in-person instruction
- Developed original interdisciplinary courses for several degree-earning programs
- Other tools utilized to maximize student engagement and success: Perusall, Packback, iClicker, open-source texts and resources.

Instruction and Invited Speaker

- Created and facilitated Department of Multidisciplinary Innovation Workshops:
 - 2023 - Academic Integrity and AI in the Classroom
 - 2023 - Innovations in PBL
 - 2023 - Integrated Interdisciplinary Classroom Innovations and Technologies
 - 2024 – Overview and Impact of Texas Law – SB17
 - 2024 – The Interdependence of Academic Cultures
- Fall 2022 – Led university-wide workshop demonstrating best practices of project-based learning via the Office of Faculty Success at UNT

Service Highlights

University

- Vice Chair, University Faculty Senate. (July 2025 - Present)
- University Senate Service, Faculty Policy Oversight Committee. (August 2024 - Present)
- University Senate Service, Faculty Senate. (August 2024 - Present)
- Faculty Mentor, Faculty Mentor. (August 1, 2023 - Present)
- University Senate Service, Faculty Senate Executive Committee. (August 1, 2023 - Present)

Department

- Department of Multidisciplinary Innovation (formerly New College) Executive Committee member 2020-2023 & 2025
 - Collaborated with other members to create policies and processes for newly formed college and department
 - Established protocols and processes for department-required faculty peer observations and reports
 - Appointed as Personnel Affairs Committee (PAC) chair for annual evaluations
 - Chairperson, Reappointment and Promotions Committee (concurrent of Executive Committee). (September 2022 - January 2023 and AY25-26).
- Academic Integrity Officer for DMI, Office of Academic Integrity. (August 2022 - Present).
- Member, *ad hoc* Workload Equity Committee. (December 2025 - January 2025)
- Member, UNT @ Frisco and CACS Strategic Planning *ad hoc* committee. (April 2024 - May 2024)
- Hosted PBL Classroom Demonstrations, Frisco Landing Grand Opening - (January 12, 2023)

Publications / Presentations

Meernik, James, Nenad Golcevski, Melissa McKay, Ayal Feinberg, Kimi King, and Roman Krastev. 2016 "Truth, Justice, and Education: Towards Reconciliation in the Former Yugoslavia". *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*. Volume 16: Number 3 pp.413-431

Meernik, James, Kimi L. King, Rosa Aloisi, and Melissa McKay. 2015 "Judicial Voting Behavior at the Appeals Chambers of the International Tribunals" *Journal of International Organizations Studies*. Volume 6 pp.28-45

King, Kimi L., James Meernik, and Melissa McKay. 2016 "Bearing Witness: The Impact of Testifying at War Crimes Tribunals" Paper for delivery at the 2016 International Studies Association and Central

and East European International Studies Association Joint International Conference in Ljubljana, Slovenia June 22- 26 2016

Manuscript in process:

“Examining the Psychological Effects of Testifying Before the ICTY - A Systematic Analysis with Expanded Explanations.”

Academic and Professional Conferences and Presentations

September 2023 – “Was It All Worth It? Measuring Witness Perception of Their Own Participation in Justice”. Presentation to the Peace and Justice Studies Association Annual Conference, Ames, IA.

February 2015 - “Echoes of Voices: A Preliminary Overview of the Victims & Witnesses Post-Testimonial Survey” Presentation to the International Studies Association Annual Conference, New Orleans, LA. Co-presenter with Dr. James Meernik and Dr. Kimi King

June 2015 – “Contact, Education, and Reconciliation in the Former Yugoslavia”. Presentation at the International Studies Association Human Rights and Justice Conference, The Hague, The Netherlands. Co-presenter with Ayal Feinberg and Roman Krastev.

Dissertation:

Title: “Making it Personal: The Psychological Lifecycle of Testifying Before the ICTY”

Committee: James Meernik (chair), Kimi L. King, T. David Mason, Jacqueline DeMeritt

Defended: May 2019

Working papers:

Melissa McKay – “Why Witnesses Choose to Testify at ICTY”

Melissa McKay – “Witness Perception of Efficacy at the ICTY”

Melissa McKay – “Challenges of Enforcing Command Superiority in War Crimes Trials”