

Interview Assessment #4

Name of Professional: Dr. Calvin Jillson

Profession: Professor of Political Science

University: Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences at Southern Methodist University

Date of Interview: 07/12/2021

Assessment:

This week I had the opportunity to interview Dr. Calvin Jillson from Southern Methodist University in Dallas. I had gotten in contact with Dr. Jillson through Mrs. Rene Archambault, who I interviewed a few weeks previously. She is a deputy director of admissions and marketing at SMU, so she had connections with Dr. Jillson and Dr. Rita Kirk who I also hope to interview very soon. Dr. Jillson earned his bachelor of science degree in political science from Oregon State University and his master's from the University of Maryland. He also taught at Louisiana State University and the University of Colorado before landing at SMU where he now teaches political science. He is also a very successful published author with several best-selling books on Texas politics, including the book Lone Star Tarnished. My main goal of this interview was to get Dr. Jillson's thoughts on the study I planned on doing for my original work and final product this year. Currently, my idea might be changing but the interview was still incredibly useful in learning how to conduct a political science research study.

Firstly I described the situation going on in Frisco and surrounding North Texas counties and their run-off election turnout, which is that some counties have been experiencing record turnout rates for local elections. This has been occurring more and more throughout the years and I wanted to just briefly get his thoughts on these instances and see what he believed to be the cause. He said that it could be a case of people beginning to realize that the stakes are higher in local elections than they used to be. He then went on to explain how in national elections when they go to runoffs the turnout is usually drastically lower than the original election. This is usually due to people thinking they've done their part and that their vote isn't that important at the end of the election because no one shows up for runoffs, but now there may be an idea that people are changing how they think about their local governments and that they may have a larger impact on their daily lives than the national levels of government.

Next, I asked him what his opinion was of the increase in civil violence or political extremist events in recent years. He said that civil violence and politically motivated violence have always been prevalent in the U.S. especially in the early stages with fringe organizations like the K.K.K. but in recent years the idea of these fringe groups committing these acts has altered. Especially with how current politicians are becoming less critical, comfortable, and even defensive of these kinds of groups garnering them national attention and a greater platform. This also leads to that ideology spreading and more individuals joining these harmful groups and this leads to more cases of this violence and aggression.

Another thing I spoke to Dr. Jillson was his idea of how party politics plays into actual policymaking and election operations. He said that in elections candidates always run with what is conceived as the public's wants and opinions even if that goes against the ideals of the party they run under the personal beliefs the candidate has themselves. They do this because they believe this will grant them the most votes and supporters but with extremist ideologies becoming more prevalent in the civilian population this is causing lawmakers to make these strict and intense positions on certain topics which could prove to be harmful to the country as a whole.

Towards the end of the interview, I had asked Dr. Jillson about some of his recent work, specifically his up-and-coming book. He had told me that his most recent book will focus on the impact of race on American politics. He is planning to look at the domestic and international impact caused by the nation's ability to solve racially based issues and challenges. I had read one of Dr. Jillson's books before and I'm very excited to read this new one when it comes out.

This concluded the interview and I was very thankful to get the chance to speak with Dr. Jillson. He had a lot of helpful guidance and tips for how to carry out my investigation and I hope to speak to him again or potentially have him as a professor if I attend Southern Methodist University.