

13th Annual SHAWNEE TRAIL CONFERENCE on American Politics and Constitutionalism



The greater Southwest trails linked American expansion in the mid-19th century west of the Mississippi to the States south of the Great Lakes and beyond to the States along the Atlantic coast. The Shawnee Trail conveyed cattle from pasture lands in former Spanish territory of Texas around San Antonio through Austin, Waco, and Dallas to rail stations and river ports in Missouri, and from there to major American cities in the Midwest and Northeast. The Chisholm and Western Trails through Oklahoma Territory into Kansas moved cattle to railway stations for shipment to Chicago and eastern markets, while the Goodnight-Loving Trail ran from west Texas up through the New Mexico and Colorado territories, providing cattle and supplies to markets for settlers, miners, and the military farther north and west.

Decades earlier, in the late 18th century, the Old Spanish Trail connected cattle from Spanish Texas to New Orleans, the gateway to the Gulf South and Caribbean. After the Louisiana Purchase of

1803, this cattle trail supplied new American settlements along the Mississippi, Missouri, and Ohio rivers. But the first known drive of Spanish cattle from Texas territory took place in 1779, when a rancher near San Antonio drove a herd of 2,000 into Louisiana territory – skirting the area north of the future site of Houston. This historic drive occurred after the Spanish Crown declared war on Great Britain and provided meat and supplies to support the Continental Army in its revolutionary effort to win independence.

Conference hosted by The Honors College at the University of Houston **Oct. 8-9, 2026**

Submission Deadline for Proposals -- JULY 20, 2026

Over the past twelve years, the Shawnee Trail Conference has provided a serious and convivial setting for scholars working on academic topics related to American constitutionalism, political thought, and public law to present research to colleagues. The 2026 conference, which will be hosted by the Honors College at the University of Houston, aims to foster intellectual exchange between institutions of higher education in this region and beyond. We encourage proposals for papers on all aspects of American political and constitutional thought, broadly construed.

Please submit proposals (max. 1-page abstracts) with CV and institutional affiliation to:

Dr. Dustin Gish, Professor of Honors and Political Theory, University of Houston -- dgish@uh.edu

*To guarantee discounted conference hotel rate at the Hilton University of Houston, room reservations must be made prior to **August 10, 2026**. Contact the hotel directly in order to book: (832) 531-6313*