

# Acknowledgements

The work in my dissertation would be impossible to complete without the kind and generous help from many people whom I have been lucky to spend my Ph.D. years with.

I consider myself immensely fortunate to have pursued my Ph.D. in Political Science at Binghamton University (SUNY). To have Professor William Heller as my advisor has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my academic career. From the moment that I took my first comparative politics seminar to the end of my dissertation work, Will has devoted countless hours to helping me in all aspects of my work, be it to discuss my questions and concerns, to share his great passion and deep understanding of political institutions, political parties, and legislative politics, as well as his insights on graduate school and job search. Will brings out the best in me by giving me the necessary freedom to work on research topics of my choice. I am very grateful to his firm belief in me and constant support.

I would also like to thank the rest of my dissertation committee, Professors Olga Shvetsova, Michael McDonald, and Leslie Gates for their valuable comments on my work. They are always available for discussions and their feedback has greatly improved my research. Tapping knowledge from four great minds has allowed me to have a broader understanding of research problems and inspired new perspectives and directions. I wish to express my gratitude to Professors Dave Clark, Wendy Martinek, Benjamin Fordham, Patrick Regan, Mikhail Filippov, Gregory Robinson, and Seden Akcinaroglu. Working with them has truly benefited my research and teaching, and made my graduate life a lot more fun. I also wish to express my gratitude to Professor Norman Schofield at Washington University in St. Louis, Professor Roderick Kiewiet at California Institute of Technology, Professor Carol Mershon at University of Virginia, Professor James Adams at University of California Davis, and Professor Michael Thies at University

of California Los Angeles for their feedback on my research. I have gained tremendous knowledge and experience while working with leading scholars in the field of political parties.

I am deeply grateful to many people who have helped me along the journey, in ways both big and small. It has been a great pleasure to get to know and work with all of them. It is simply impossible to name them all. I thank my fellow colleagues both inside and outside Binghamton, in particular Jennifer Emery, Aparna Kher, Diana Branduse, Alper Ecevit, Andrei Zhirnov, Sheryl Symons, Pi-Han Tsai at University of California Irvine, Marika Csapo at University of California Los Angeles, Jonathan Klingler at University of Rochester, and Ping Xu at University of Rhode Island, for their friendship and help. Without them, my Ph.D. studies would not have proceeded smoothly. Special thanks to department secretaries, Sandy Glemby and Erin Campbell, for their assistance with anything and everything administrative over my six years at Binghamton.

Last but not least, I thank my parents, Guoqiang Hu and Dedi Zhao, for their unconditional and endless love, support, and care. They have given me the drive to travel to the other side of the world to pursue my dreams and encouraged me to accomplish my goals as I ventured along the path. To my grandmothers in heaven, my dissertation is humbly dedicated to you.