

**Name:** Michael J. Sechler

**Majors:** Politics, Philosophy, Economics, and Psychology

**Honors and Awards:**

- U.S. Steel Foundation Research Fellowship
- First Prize, Europe: East & West Research Symposium
- Second Prize, Early English Books Online Essay Competition
- Brackenridge Research Fellowship
- Research Abroad Program Grant (London, UK)

**Experience and Community Outreach:**

- Intern, U.S. Senator Arlen Specter
- Teaching Assistant, English Origins of American Law
- Volunteer, Jim Roddey for County Executive Campaign
- Volunteer, Extra-Ordinary Tutoring Program
- Member, National Society of Collegiate Scholars

**Future Plans**

"I'm taking a year off and working (government, non-profit, or finance) before applying to and entering law school and (possibly) graduate school for history. Eventually, I would like to be a professor of law, specializing in English (or American) legal history."

**Voting Information**

Highland Park, PA

**Project Abstract**

Henry de Bracton was the attributed author of a 13th-century legal treatise entitled *On the Laws and Customs of England*. Along with Glanvill's 12th-century treatise and Blackstone's *Commentaries of the 18th-century*, *On the Laws and Customs of England* stands as one of the most influential works on the Common Law of England. "Bracton," as the work is known, comes into its fullest and most influential use during the English Civil Wars of the 1640s, when both opponents and supporters of the Stuart monarchy relied on the treatise to further their particular theories of legitimacy. Literally hundreds of pamphlets deployed particular portions of Bracton to prove either that the king deserved the unconditional loyalty of his subjects (which meant in turn that rebellion against him was treason and blasphemy), or that subjects had the right to make war against, depose, and even execute an errant ruler. The current project entails a detailed study of the uses of Bracton in English Civil War (1642–1649) and Interregnum (1649–1660) discourse. Despite the centrality of the *Laws and Customs of England* to seventeenth-century political thought, no scholar to date has investigated in a detailed and coherent manner the precise ways in which both loyalists and rebels used Bracton to construct their theories of legitimacy. My study will remedy this deficit and thereby add an important piece to the puzzle of the "century of revolution" in Early Modern England. Such an investigation can greatly add to what is already known about the ideological framework in which contemporaries made policy and justified their actions.

**Project Faculty Advisor:** Janelle Greenberg, Department of History, School of Arts and Sciences, Pittsburgh Campus

