Dr. Yonatan L. Morse is the recipient of the Harold N. Glassman Distinguished Dissertation Award in the Social Sciences for his dissertation, “Party Matters: The Institutional Origins of Competitiveness and Hegemony in Post-Cold War Africa,” which he defended with Distinction, in August, 2013. Dr. Morse earned his Ph.D. in Government, concentrating in comparative politics and international relations, under the mentorship of Professor Marc M. Howard.

Dr. Morse’s dissertation explores Africa’s former single-party regimes and argues that differences in party capacity that developed under single-party rule is a primary factor differentiating forms of electoral authoritarianism. Through typological theorizing and case-studies of Tanzania, Kenya, and Cameroon, his dissertation demonstrated how single-party regimes that elevated the party as an important decision-making institution, made credible investments into party institutionalization, and kept open avenues for elite recruitment were less likely to experience elite defection during multiparty elections. Likewise, he argued, single-party regimes that built strong party-affiliated mobilizing structures and engaged in wide practices of social incorporation were able to rely on persistently large electoral support. In the absence of these party capacities, he concluded, regimes were forced to rely more heavily on fraud and a range of contingent factors to survive. By differentiating these forms of electoral authoritarianism and their variant institutional underpinnings, his dissertation makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the durability of authoritarianism and the potential path toward democratization.

Dr. Morse is currently an Assistant Professor of Practice and the Associate Director of the Democracy and Governance Program in the Department of Government at Georgetown. His research has resulted in two publications: “‘Party Matters:’ the institutional Origins of Tanzania’s Competitive Hegemony,” published in 2014 in the journal, Democratization; and “From Single Parties to Electoral Authoritarian Regimes: Party Capacity and the Sources of Hegemony and Competitiveness in Post-Cold War Africa” forthcoming in January 2016 in the journal, Comparative Politics. Prior to graduating with the PhD, Dr. Morse’s article, “The Era of Electoral Authoritarianism,” was published in the January 2012 edition of World Politics (64, no. 1), arguably the most prestigious journal in the field.

The Graduate School is very proud to award Dr. Yonatan Morse the Glassman Dissertation Award in the Social Sciences.