

Texas Political Methodology Conference, 2019

Sponsors:

Rice University, Political Science

Rice University, Center for World Democracies,

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The Texas Political Methodology Conference, 2019 will be held at Rice University on March 22-23, 2019. The preliminary schedule, the program of paper presentations and posters, maps and venue information is below.

Please note if you have been assigned to discuss a paper.

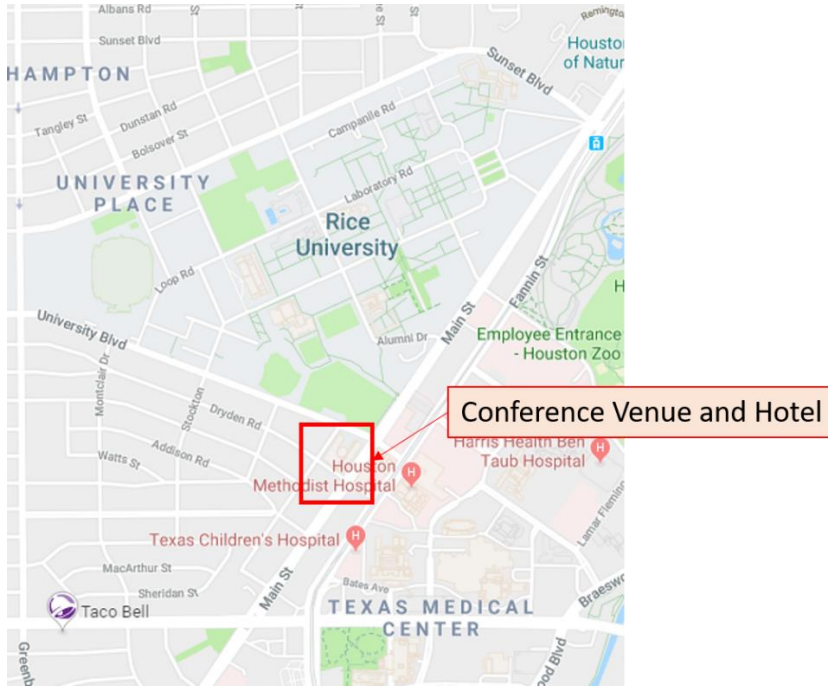
Presenters should send their papers to their discussant (see email list on last page of this document) and to Randy Stevenson (randystevenson@gmail.com) no later than Monday, March 18 and preferably sooner.

Paper presentations should be about 30 minutes or less and discussants should try to limit themselves to 5-10 minutes. We have scheduled 1 hour for each paper. If you or your discussant go long, you will leave little time for feedback and comments, so please plan accordingly.

We will adopt the successful format of several recent small conferences and not schedule formal breaks between papers, instead, you are encouraged to use the few minutes it takes to change presenters to refill your coffee and snacks, etc.

All events are either in the Rice conference center at the BioScience Research Collaborative or the Hilton Houston Plaza Medical Center. These are about a block apart and so if you are staying at the Hilton, you should not have to worry about transportation between venues.

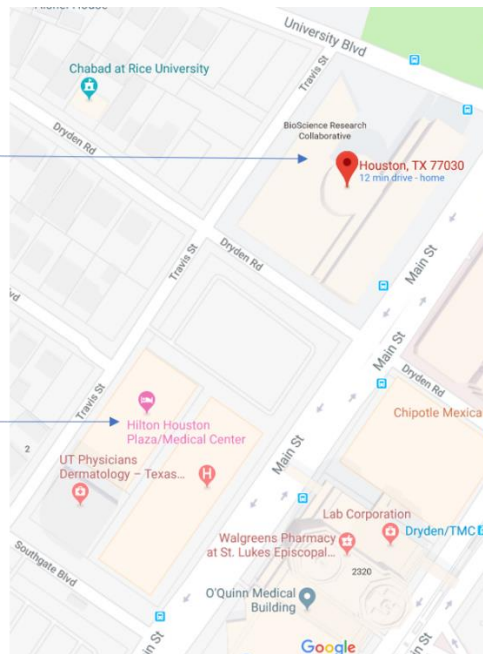
Overview: The venues for all the events (including the conference hotel) are located just south of the main campus of Rice University.



Detailed View

BRC – location of paper presentations
(10th Floor Conference Room 1003)

Conference Hotel and location of
Poster Reception, Keynote, and
Friday Dinner



The paper presentations will occur at the BioScience Research Collaborative (BRC) building, which is located at 6500 Main on Rice University campus. Visitor parking is available for a daily fee (~\$12 per day) and is in the underground parking garage, which is located off Dryden Road. Note that the BRC parking garage does not allow in and out.

Friday, March 22					
Event	Presenter	Discussant	Time	Location	Notes
Arrival and Boxed Lunch			11am - 12pm	BRC 10th Floor Conference Room 1003	
Paper Presentation 1	Michelle Torres	Christopher Lucas	12pm -1pm	BRC 10th Floor Conference Room 1003	
Paper Presentation 2	Casey Crisman-Cox	Ryan Kennedy	1pm – 2pm	BRC 10th Floor Conference Room 1003	
Paper Presentation 3	Jude Hays	Harvey Palmer	2pm - 3pm	BRC 10th Floor Conference Room 1003	
Paper Presentation 4	Ryan Kennedy	David Fortunato	3pm - 4pm	BRC 10th Floor Conference Room 1003	
Poster Session and Reception			5pm - 6:30pm	Hilton Houston Plaza Medical Center Roof-top terrace 9 th floor	Appetizers and beer and Wine provided. Cash bar for other drinks (no credit cards)
Keynote	Raymond Duch		6:30pm - 7:45 pm Keynote will begin at 7pm. Please be seated at the dining tables and make dinner and drink orders before 7	Hilton Houston Plaza Medical Center 8 th floor dining room	Appetizers and beer and Wine provided. Cash bar for other drinks (no credit cards)
Dinner			7:45-9:30	Hilton Houston Plaza Medical Center 8 th floor dining room	Appetizers and beer and Wine provided. Cash bar for other drinks (no credit cards)
Saturday, March 23					

Event	Presenter	Discussant	Time	Location	Notes
Breakfast Tacos			9:30am - 10am	BRC 10th Floor Conference Room 1003	
Paper Presentation 5	Christopher Wlezien	Scott Cook	10am – 11am	BRC 10th Floor Conference Room 1003	
Paper Presentation 6	Christopher Lucas	Michelle Torres	11am – 12pm	BRC 10th Floor Conference Room 1003	
Paper Presentation 7	Ji Xue	Pablo Pinto	1pm - 1pm	BRC 10th Floor Conference Room 1003	
Planning meeting			1pm -1:15 pm	BRC 10th Floor Conference Room 1003	

Papers

Paper 1:

Presenter: Michelle Torres

Co-author: Johnathan Homola

Title: "The shades and shapes of the pink wave: Visual perspectives of the Women's March"

The information that media provides about political events and discussions related to gender issues lay the foundation of opinions and attitudes towards them. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the content and symbols that media outlets use to communicate messages in order to assess their impact and identify potential biases. In this project we focus on studying the ways in which newspapers portray the Women's March through the use of images. First, we study the prevalence of images and news related to the most recent Women's March on the covers of local newspapers in the U.S. We then use a novel technique from the computer vision field to identify underlying frames in the corpus of images from the covers, as well as to estimate the different effects that newspapers' and citizens' ideologies have on the generation of such topics with the objective of analyzing information provision dynamics. Finally, we aim to compare the visual frames we identify to those generated on other platforms like Instagram in an attempt to study whether there is any bias in the reporting of the Women's March with respect to what the movement aims to communicate. This project allows us to have a better understanding of the way in which women's issues are framed through the use of visuals in order to shed light on other mechanisms in which opinions about gender issues are generated.

Discussant: Christopher Lucas

Paper 2

Presenter: Casey Crisman-Cox

Title: "On Estimating Substantive Effects in Binary Outcome Panel Models"

Abstract: Dummy variable maximum likelihood (ML) estimation for binary response panel models suffers from an incidental parameter problem, making heavily biased in short panels. The standard response to this problem is a conditional ML that removes group-specific effects. While conditional ML consistently estimates the coefficients on time-varying covariates, it makes predicted probabilities impossible to compute. In response to this problem multiple approaches for computing these effects have emerged, but with no guidance as to when one solution may be preferred to another. I address this question by comparing two approaches: Penalized-ML (PML) and Correlated Random Effects (CRE). I find that when the number within-group observations is small-to-moderate, the CRE is overwhelmingly preferred, but in larger datasets, the differences between these approaches are negligible. However, the both approaches become increasingly infeasible with a large number of groups. I solve this last problem by providing R code for a sparse PML.

Discussant: Ryan Kennedy

Paper 3

Presenter: Jude Hays

Co-authors: Michael Aklin, Junghyun Lim

Title: "Testing for the Type of Missingness"

Abstract: Political methodologists have revisited recently the wisdom of multiple imputation as an alternative to listwise deletion. Multiple imputation weakly dominates listwise deletion when missingness, conditional on the observed data, is random (MAR). However, when missingness is nonignorable (NI) the decision of whether to multiply impute missing data or listwise delete cases with missing data is more complicated. Focusing on outcomes, we propose a simple test to help distinguish random missingness from non-ignorable missingness. To implement this test it is necessary separate variables *ex ante* into three categories: variables that provide information about the outcome only, variables that provide information about missingness only, and variables that provide information about both missingness and the outcome.

Discussant: Harvey Palmer

Paper 4

Presenter: Ryan Kennedy

Co-authors: Scott Clifford, Philip Waggoner, Ryan Jewell

Title: "The Shape of and Solutions to the MTurk Quality Crisis"

Abstract: Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) is widely used for data collection in the social sciences -- by one estimate, more than 1,200 published studies per year use the service. However, researchers recently noticed a decline in data quality, stemming from the use of Virtual Private Servers (VPSs) to fraudulently gain access to surveys restricted to US residents. Unfortunately, we know little about the scale and consequence of this fraud, and tools for social scientists to detect and prevent this fraud are underdeveloped. Analyzing over 100 studies conducted by over 20 scholars on MTurk since 2013, we demonstrate that this problem has recently spiked, but is not new. Two new studies show that these respondents provide particularly low-quality data. We provide two solutions: an easy-to-use application for identifying fraud in existing datasets and a method for blocking fraudulent respondents in Qualtrics surveys. We demonstrate the effectiveness of the screening procedure in a third study. Our results suggest that these fraudulent respondents provide unusually low-quality data, but can be easily identified and screened out.

Discussant: David Fortunato

Paper 5

Presenter Christopher Wlezien

Co-authors: Lindsay Dun, Stuart Soroka

Title: "The Ghost in the Machine? Dictionaries, Supervised Learning, and Mass Media Coverage of Public Policy"

Abstract: There are alternative approaches to automated content analysis. In some cases, scholars rely on dictionaries to classify content; in others, they employ some form of supervised or unsupervised machine learning. There often is a sense that the latter are superior, but little research directly compares the two approaches, and the work that does compare them does not include a referent with which to objectively evaluate the success of one approach or the other. This paper begins to redress this imbalance, focusing on applications of hierarchical dictionaries and supervised machine learning to classify media coverage of government policy. The analysis examines millions of national newspaper articles on defense, welfare, and health spending in the US alongside actual budget policy outputs. The latter provide the objective empirical referent with which we can assess the performance of the two content-analytic approaches. Results highlight that in this context dictionary-based approaches consistently perform better than supervised learning ones. Indeed, while our dictionaries often work quite well, supervised learning reveals little correspondence between spending and media content. This does not mean that dictionary-based analysis dominates machine learning in all instances, of course. It is likely that dictionaries are advantageous primarily in instances in which there are a clear and finite number of words used to speak about a given topic; and the use of hierarchical dictionaries, rather than a single dictionary, makes a big difference as well. It is nevertheless important to recognize that the best content-analytic approach can vary widely depending on the requirements of the data and theory.

Discussant: Scott Cook

Paper 6

Presenter: Christopher Lucas

Title: "What type of content do campaigns use in their efforts to influence voter behavior?"

Abstract: In the 2016 election cycle political campaigns spent over \$4.4 billion on television advertisements. What type of content do campaigns use in their efforts to influence voter behavior? Past efforts to answer questions such as these, where media and television content are the topic of interest, require researchers to engage in herculean efforts to manually watch and classify video content. This is time consuming and prohibitively expensive for most researchers. I develop a novel, general approach to video classification, the Audio-Video Neural Network (AVNN), which is the first contribution from political science to deep learning. The AVNN recovers subtle categories of interest to political scientists like "fear" and "negativity" while also successfully learning to parse more topical classes like "political advertisement" and "cable news." Importantly, the model I propose can learn from both visual and audio features and has been designed to work well with relatively small training

data in order to best suit problems in social science. I demonstrate the AVNN by analyzing campaign advertisements in American elections, first showing that my model can be used to separate political campaign advertisements from cable news. All methods described here are implemented in easy-to-use R and Python packages.

Discussant: Michelle Torres

Paper 7

Presenter: Ji Xue

Co-author: Monika Nalepa

Title: "Can the number of veto players measure policy stability?"

Abstract: Title: Can the number of veto players measure policy stability? Abstract: Ever since the publication of George Tsebelis's "Veto Players", political scientists have constructed measures of policy stability on the basis of his theory's implications. In this research note, we indicate two popular misunderstandings associated with this use. To some extent these problems are known, but they scholars persist in ignoring them nevertheless, warranting drawing our attention to them. The first is the failure to distinguish between weak and strong implications of veto player theory. The second misunderstanding lies in the fact that scholars ignore information about the preferences of veto players in different settings. Focusing on the sheer number of veto players is particularly dangerous when constructing measures that are applied to draw inferences from cross-sectional comparisons. After explaining the nature of these misunderstanding using a stylized example, we provide evidence from two popular datasets proposing measures of policy stability that have been used in political science journal publications. Using direct measures of policy change, we show that current policy stability measures are not ideal to use in quantitative research. We also develop a set of best practices for using the number of veto players as a measure of policy stability.

Discussant: Pablo Pinto

Posters

Poster 1

Author(s): Carlos Rivera

Title: "A Terrifying Journey to the Centre of Politics: Political Centristism as an Effect of Mortality Salience and a Need for Closure"

Abstract: Three studies assessed the relationship between need for closure (NFC) and evaluations of political ideology conversions as a function of mortality salience (MS). Following an experimental (MS) or control induction, 156 participants evaluated politicians who switched political ideologies. Results indicate that MS induced people high in NFC to express greater support for politicians seeking consensus in the political centre, an effect consistent with research linking NFC to desires for group centrism and collective closure. A second study (N = 170) clarified this issue further with participants evaluating political parties depicted as moving from their traditional left/right positions toward the political centre or remaining true to their traditional ideologies. Participants high in NFC exposed to MS expressed significantly higher levels of support for parties moving from the right to the centre than for other parties (including those moving from the left to the centre). A third study (N = 276) explored how the activation of specific needs for cognitive closure via MS would result in an increased support for a centrist political party described as uniform in thought and enjoying an internal (vs. split) mandate. Results further indicate that mortality reminders amplify demands for consensus and clarity more than a demand for ideological clarity.

Poster 2

Author(s): Yue Ning, Ryan Kennedy

Title: "Precursor Analysis in Event Data Using Nested Multi-Instance Learning"

Abstract: The development and availability of large-scale, multi-source event data is potentially revolutionary for forecasting political events. While there have been great strides in producing models of this data, one area that has not had much influence yet in political science is precursor mining -- discovering the types of events that anticipate subsequent events. This paper introduces a framework for analyzing event precursors across multiple countries over time utilizing the Integrated Crisis Early Warning System (ICEWS) protest data. This method, nested multi-instance learning (nMIL) shows substantial improvement for forecasting protest events in ten countries over baseline models. We also utilize dynamic topic modeling to show the evolution of these precursors over time, as well as several case studies to demonstrate the qualitative behavior of the learning system.

Poster 3

Author(s): Yuki Atsusaka, Randy Stevenson, and Ahra Wu

Title: "Randomization Probabilities in the Warner's Design and the Crosswise Model: Do Respondents Care?"

Abstract: In this poster, we validate the most fundamental, but never empirically confirmed, propositions that survey respondents must be and must not be susceptible to the level of randomization probabilities in the randomized response technique (Warner's design) and the crosswise model, respectively. The Warner's design and the crosswise model were both developed in order to elicit respondents' candid answers to sensitive questions, despite the social desirability bias, by providing a higher level of privacy protection (i.e., adding noise) at the sacrifice of statistical efficiency. In our population-based survey experiment, we explore if respondents actually behave differently depending on the level of randomization probability in both models and present its optimal range which ensures the highest statistical power.

Poster 4

Author(s): Yoo Sun Jung, Flávio D. S. Souza, Andrew Q. Phillips, and Guy D. Whitten

Title: "DYNSIMPIE II: Software for Estimating and Presenting Dynamic Pie Models

Poster 5

Author(s): Janica Magat, Flávio D. S. Souza

Title: "Modeling the Size of Pie"

Abstract: In this project, we begin with an overview of the technical issues associated with the overall size of compositions, or "size of pie" when dealing with dynamic compositional outcome variables (Katz and King 1999; Breunig and Busemeyer 2012; Phillips, Rutherford, and Whitten 2016). We propose a series of strategies for dealing with size of pie dynamic phenomena. To assess the advantages and disadvantages of these different strategies, we first compare the inferences from them using a series of Monte Carlo experiments. We then evaluate these strategies using data on political budgeting. Our preliminary results show that these different strategies have a considerable impact on substantive inferences.

Poster 6

Author(s): Samantha Zuhlke

Title: "Political Exit? Positioning Nonprofit Donations within Political Context"

Abstract: Five days after President Trump's election in the 2016 U.S. presidential race, the American Civil Liberties Union received 120,000 donations totaling \$7.2 million dollars. By comparison, during the same

five-day window following President Obama's 2012 reelection, the ACLU received only 354 donations totaling \$27,806. How do U.S. presidential elections affect individual donations to nonprofits? The goal of this study is to examine how U.S. political events at the national level, such as the election of a new president, affect an individual's decision to donate to a nonprofit. I argue the effect of a national political event on an individual's propensity to donate is moderated by an individual's political environment, such as the state they live in, and an individual's partisanship. To explain when an individual does or does not donate following a national political event, I draw upon Hirschman's (1970) seminal theory of exit, voice, and loyalty. Employing a triple interactive model, I find that the transition to a Democratic president significantly increases the probability that both Republicans and Democrats will donate to a nonprofit. Political environment, measured as a blue state in a presidential election, has no moderating effect on Democratic donations and an unexpected effect on Republican donations. Co-authors: none

Poster 7

Author(s): Yuki Atsusaka, Ahra Wu, and Randy Stevenson

Title: "Randomization Probabilities in the Warner's Design and the Crosswise Model: Do Respondents Care?"

Abstract: Co-authored with Ahra Wu and Randy Stevenson) In this poster, we validate the most fundamental, but never empirically confirmed, propositions that survey respondents must be and must not be susceptible to the level of randomization probabilities in the randomized response technique (Warner's design) and the crosswise model, respectively. The Warner's design and the crosswise model were both developed in order to elicit respondents' candid answers to sensitive questions, despite the social desirability bias, by providing a higher level of privacy protection (i.e., adding noise) at the sacrifice of statistical efficiency. In our population-based survey experiment, we explore if respondents actually behave differently depending on the level of randomization probability in both models and present its optimal range which ensures the highest statistical power.

Poster 8

Author(s): Harold Clarke, Karl Ho, Marianne Stewart

Title: "Trumping the Economy?"

Abstract: Since his election in November 2016, Donald Trump has repeatedly claimed that he is responsible for a surge in the performance of the American economy. In this poster, my co-authors, Karl Ho (University of Texas at Dallas) and Marianne Stewart (University of Texas at Dallas) and I will present the results of analyses of trends in the performance of the macro-economy over the period from January 2009 to February 2019. A principal focus is the stock-market. Using EGARCH models we will analyze if the dynamics of the mean and variance of major market indices (Dow Jones, S&P 500, NASDAQ) have varied systematically since Trump became president. We also will conduct similar

analyses for other major macro-economic indicators such as growth and unemployment, with the latter considered for population sub-groups such as African-Americans, Hispanics and women. Data for the analyses are downloaded from the FRED (Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis) Database website.

Poster 9

Author(s): Samuel York

Title: "Topics in Political Science"

Abstract: Over the past five decades, thousands of papers have been added to the pages of Political Science journals. While individual researchers are no doubt intimate with a small subset of these papers, few understand the full breadth and scope of the field. In order to rectify this, the present work seeks to classify and analyze work published within the field since 1970. In order to do so, we employ a structural topic model on over 50,000 abstracts taken from the pages of the top 92 political science journals. We then analyze which factors lead publications to be successfully cited within each topic. This work is still in its preliminary stages, however, so as of yet we do not have results to report.

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