

Nitheesha Nakka

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Personal Webpage: <https://nitheeshan.github.io/>

GitHub: <https://github.com/NitheeshaN>

Education

The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA

Ph.D. Political Science and Social Data Analytics

M.A. Political Science

Expected Graduation: May 2025

May 2022

Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, NY

M.A. Sociology

August 2020

University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT

B.A. Honors in Economics, Minor: French

Dean's List, New England Scholar, Cum Laude, Alpha Lambda Delta

May 2016

Background

Methods: Machine Learning; Large Language Modelling; Natural Language Processing; Network Analysis; Causal Inference; Time Series; Big Data Analytics; Data Mining

Research: American Politics, Legislative Politics; Social Media; Race and Gender; Society and Technology; Women Peace and Security, AI Policy

Publications

Nakka, Nitheesha, “An Evaluation of the Google Perspective API by Race and Gender”, 2025. *ACM Web Science Conference Proceedings Forthcoming*

- Paper Link: <https://osf.io/an2rw>

Ishita Gopal, Taegyeon Kim, **Nitheesha Nakka**, Fred J Boehmke, Jeff J Harden, Bruce A Desmarais. “The national network of US state legislators on Twitter”, 2024. *Political Science Research and Methods*. Published online: 1-13.

- Paper Link: <https://doi.org/10.1017/psrm.2024.52>

Kim, Taegyeon, **Nitheesha Nakka**, Ishita Gopal, Bruce Desmarais, Abigail Mancinelli, Jeff Harden, Hyein Ko, Fred Boehmke, 2022. “Attention to the COVID-19 pandemic on Twitter: Partisan differences among U.S. state legislators.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly*. 47(4).

- Paper Link: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/lsq.12367>

Working Papers

Nitheesha Nakka, “The Racial and Gender Divide in Toxic Online Messaging Towards Politicians”

- Paper Link: <https://osf.io/md9f8/>
- Presented at: Institute of Computational Data Science (ICDS) Symposium 2021, Political Networks (PolNet) Conference 2021, Midwest Political Science Association Conference 2022

Nitheesha Nakka, “Racial and Gender Biases in State Legislators Twitter Endorsements: A Network Analysis” (Dissertation Chapter)

- Paper Link: <https://osf.io/rg9s4/>
- Presented at: Political Methodology Conference 2023, State Politics and Policy Conference (SPPC) 2024

Nakka, Nitheesha, Ömer F. Yalçın, Bruce Desmarais, Sarah Rajtmajer, Burt Monroe, “Online Social Network Content Produced by Public Officials: Considerations in Topic Modeling” (Under Review)

- Presented at: PolNet 2022, ICDS Symposium 2022

Tai, Yuehong Cassandra, **Nitheesha Nakka**, Sarah Michele Rajtmajer, Kevin Munger, Yu-Ru Lin, Bruce A. Desmarais, “Digitally Accountable Public Representation (DAPR)”

- Paper Link: <https://osf.io/preprints/osf/2h9xg>
- Presented at: SPPC 2024

Tai, Yuehong Cassandra, Isaac Pollert, **Nitheesha Nakka**, Lingyu Fuca, “Understanding Asian Hate in State Legislatures: An Electoral Connection”

- Paper Link: <https://osf.io/y94tm/>
- Presented at: American Political Science Association Conference 2024, SPSA 2025

Pablo Barberá, Amber Boydston, Suzanna Linn, Ryan McMahon, Jonathan Nagler, **Nitheesha Nakka**, “Economic Conditions, Economic Perceptions, and Media Coverage of the United States Economy”

- Paper Link: Forthcoming

Peer Reviewer

Research Article Reviewer for: *Journal of Quantitative Description: Digital Media 2024*, Web Science Conference 2024, ACM KDD Conference 2024, *Political Analysis Journal 2023*
Program Committee Member for ACM Web Conference 2023

Research Experience

Pennsylvania State University

Dr. Bruce Desmarais

August 2020-Present

- Aided in constructing a big-data pipeline of public officials’ social media posts across multiple platforms
- Developed web-scraping tools in Python to compile a comprehensive dataset of American public officials’ social media accounts
- Assessed prediction accuracy of open-sourced classification tools
- Utilized the X API and internal relational databases to collect and process millions of tweets over multiple years
- Used machine learning models to classify ideology of politicians’ social media posts
- Created structural topic models of United State legislators X posts using a high-performance computing system to identify model considerations when doing large-scale text analysis
- Created data visualizations in R that distinguish partisan discussion of the Covid-19 pandemic amongst United States Legislators on social media

Dr. Suzanna Linn

January 2021-Present

- Conducted a time series analysis to identify how objective economic indicators drive content of economic media coverage and presented results into meaningful figures

Dr. Bruce Desmarais & Dr. Kevin Munger

May 2021-August 2021

- Utilized the YouTube API to collect and analyze audio and text data of state legislative sessions
- Assembled a comprehensive dataset of all United States legislators’ demographic characteristics including hand-coded race and gender variables

Stony Brook University

Dr. Rebekah Burroway

September 2018-May 2020

- Conducted a cross national analysis that measures the effects of women’s financial independence on child health outcomes using STATA

Dr. Kathleen Fallon

September 2018-July 2020

- Compiled a dataset of 80 years of USAID policy documentation to determine differences in American foreign and domestic aid initiatives

Teaching Experience

Pennsylvania State University

Workshop Presenter

Introduction to High Performance Computing Use in Academic Research

April 2023

Introduction to ROAR Collab: Interactive Jupyter and RStudio Sessions

March 2024

Pennsylvania State University

Teaching Assistant

Analyzing the American Presidency: Data Analysis with R

August 2022-December 2022

Stony Brook University

Course Instructor

Historical and Contemporary Sociological Theory

May 2020-July 2020

Teaching Assistant

Historical Development of Sociological Theory

August 2017-December 2017

August 2018-December 2018

August 2019-December 2019

Gender and Reproduction

January 2018-May 2018

Research Methods

January 2019-May 2019

Media and Society

January 2020-May 2020

Work Experience

RAND Corporation

Research Associate

May 2024 – Present

Conducting research and providing actionable policy implementation tools to USCYBERCOM on integrating the Women, Peace, and Security agenda within the cybersecurity field

School of Medicine at Stony Brook University

Administrative Assistant

May 2018-September 2019

Managed data collection and system organization for medical school admissions office

University of Connecticut

Student Activities Event Coordinator

August 2016-June 2017

Arranged weekly art exhibits featuring student and coordinated school-wide student government elections alongside advising student government leaders

Asian American Cultural Center (AsACC) Pan Asian Council

Member

January 2014-April 2015

Coordinator

April 2015-May 2016

Coordinated all members and student organizations within AsACC to host school-wide cultural programming, conferences and charitable events that reinforce and educate Asian American initiatives including raising over \$3,400 for AsACC programming via crowdfunding

Skills

Programming Languages: R, Python, SQL, Excel

Spoken Languages: Telugu (fluent speaking ability), French (proficient reading and speaking ability)

Presentations

University of Pittsburgh

State Politics and Policy Conference

Poster Presentation

May 2023

“High Profile Minority Politicians and the Emergence of Minority State Legislators: A Pilot Study”

Pennsylvania State University

CAPR Conference

Poster Presentation

March 2023

“High Profile Minority Politicians and the Emergence of Minority State Legislators: A Pilot Study”

University of Connecticut

Identifying the Missing Power of Asian American in CT Leadership Conference

Workshop Presenter

November 2016

“Discussion vs. Debate: Media Coverage on the 2016 Presidential Election”

Panelist

Panel to mentor undergraduate students on job and graduate school search

Workshop Presenter

November 2014

“Asian Female Representation in the Media”

Grants and Awards

Pennsylvania State University

Department of Political Science: Outstanding Graduate Student Award

Awarded June 2024

- This award recognizes graduate students for their research and extracurricular contributions to the Political Science field and provides \$1000 in research funding.

Department of Political Science: Paterno Graduate Fellowship

Awarded April 2024

Department of Political Science: CAPR Graduate Fellowship

Awarded April 2024

- CAPR and Paterno Fellows are recognized for their academic performance and exceptional promise within their program. Recipients are relieved of graduate assistantship responsibilities for one spring semester to focus exclusively on research.

Department of Political Science: Summer Graduate Research Award

Awarded May 2023

- \$4000 funding to support co-authored research

Center for Social Data Analytics Pre- Doctoral Fellow 2023-2024

Awarded April 2023

McCourtney Institute of Democracy

Awarded April 2023

- \$1,000 funding to support dissertation research.

Center for Social Data Analytics

Awarded April 2023

- \$3,800 funding to support dissertation research.

Department of Political Science: Research Grant

Awarded March 2023

- \$2,000 funding to support dissertation research

Department of Political Science: CAPR Political Science Fellowship

Awarded March 2022

Institute of Computational Data Science Scholar

Awarded July 2020

- \$2000 funding to support graduate students pursuing interdisciplinary computational research

National Science Foundation Fellowship
Political Methodology Conference
- \$1,650 Travel Grant

Awarded June 2023

Tom Carsey Graduate Student Award
State Politics and Policy Conference
- \$300 Travel Grant

Awarded May 2023 and June 2024

University of Connecticut

Rockwood Q. P. Chin Scholarship

Awarded Spring 2015

- \$400 award given to an outstanding junior or senior economics major who has demonstrated a special interest and ability in the field of international economics

Asian American Cultural Center (AsACC) Endowment Fund

Awarded Spring 2014

- \$1000 four-year renewable scholarship given to undergraduates who are actively involved with AsACC programs, including leadership in Asian American student organizations, and involvement in an Asian American initiative, research project or community cause within Connecticut

References

Bruce Desmarais

Professor of Political Science and Social Data
Analytics
230 Pond Lab
Pennsylvania State University
bdesmarais@psu.edu

Sarah Rajtmajer

Assistant Professor of Information Sciences and
Technology
E369 Westgate Building
Pennsylvania State University
Smr46@psu.edu

Suzanna Linn

Professor of Political Science
313 Pond Lab
Pennsylvania State University
sld8@psu.edu

Kyleanne Hunter

RAND Corporation
Director, RAND Women, Peace, and Security
Initiative; Senior Political Scientist; Professor of
Policy Analysis, Pardee RAND Graduate School
Santa Monica, CA
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Ray Block

Associate Professor of Political Science and
African American Studies
308 Pond Lab
Pennsylvania State University
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Joslyn Fleming

RAND Corporation
Defense Policy Researcher; Professor of Policy
Analysis, Pardee RAND Graduate School
Santa Monica, CA
Joslyn_Fleming@rand.org