# PLSC 476: Empirical Legal Studies

## Final Examination

The final exam for PLSC 476 is a take-home, essay-format exam. The general structure of the exam involves using data to investigate and answer a series of questions about one or more legal / judicial topics. Exam answers will be structured as essays.

**Please answer <u>three</u> of the following five questions.**

(Three shall be the number thou shalt count, and the number of the counting shall be three. Four shalt thou not count, neither count thou two, excepting that thou then proceed to three. Five is right out.)

**Questions**

1. Recently, Butcher and Squire (2021) created an updated measure of state supreme court professionalism.[1] That measure is available at the article's dataverse archive, and as the variable `ProfScore2019` in the `Q1.csv` file located in the Final Exam folder for this course. This question asks you to use statistical and graphical means to assess the hypothesis that state supreme court professionalism is associated with the level of higher educational attainment – here, the percentage of a state's population who hold bachelors' degrees, dubbed `BAPercent` – in each state.

2. The data (`Q2.csv`) in this question are drawn from the dataverse archive for:

   Gill, Rebecca D., and Kate Eugenis. 2019. "Do Voters Prefer Women Judges? Deconstructing the Competitive Advantage in State Supreme Court Elections." *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* 19(4):399-427.

   As in their article, in this question your task is to examine – using graphical and statistical methods – whether and to what extent female state supreme court candidates are advantaged or disadvantaged in running for election and reelection.[2] In doing so,

   a) treat the vote share variables (`c1vshare` and `c2vshare`) as your primary outcome of interest, and

   b) be sure to examine the four possible combinations of candidate genders (male-male, male-female, female-male, and female-female).

3. This question considers data on "Article 177" references to the European Court of Justice (ECJ). Article 177 references are instances in which national judges call upon the ECJ to issue a ruling in a case in which European Community law is material to the issue at hand. Since the vast majority of these cases deal with economic and trade issues, your assignment in this question is to examine the effects of trade levels on the number of such references. The data consist of annual observations on

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[1]Court professionalism is a measure of the extent to which state supreme courts are regularized and institutionalized.

[2]Note that the data here are organized by the race; each row of data contains information on one and often two candidates (`c1name` and `c2name`), with variables labeled "c1xxxx" and "c2xxxx" for information about the first and second candidates, respectively. See the codebook for more information.

15 EU nations for the period 1961-1995 ($N = 316$). The primary variable of interest is the number of Article 177 references brought to the ECJ from that nation in that particular year (`Cases`). You'll examine the effect of three key variables on that outcome:

- `Trade` – The annual sum of imports plus exports, in billions of (constant) U.S. dollars.
- `Trade Balance` – The difference between annual imports and annual exports, in billions of (constant) U.S. dollars; higher values denote greater trade deficits (that is, higher imports / lower exports).
- `Centralization` – Governmental centralization, coded 1 if the state is a unitary system, and 0 if a federal/decentralized one.

International relations scholars would predict that higher overall levels of trade will increase the number of Article 177 claims. This general effect, however, could be mediated by two factors. In addition, Article 177 references ought to be greater for states which have high negative trade imbalances (i.e., greater imports and fewer exports) than among those which have net trade surpluses. Second, one might expect that, because cases can be brought from any level of government, federal systems (with their higher number of potential "points of contact") will have absolutely higher numbers of references than will unified systems. Your assignment is to test the above hypotheses, using linear regression or some other tool(s), and to briefly discuss your findings.

4. Use statistical and graphical methods, and the data on law school expenses, to answer the following two questions:

   a) On average, are private law schools' tuitions (`ftnonrestuition`) higher than public law schools' tuitions?

   b) On average, are the total costs of private law schools (`ftnonrestuition` + `offcampuscosts`) higher than those for public law schools?

5. Use the "modern" (1946-2020), justice-centered Supreme Court Database[3] to examine the following hypothesis:

<div align="center">

U.S. Supreme Court justices become more moderate in their voting
the longer they serve on the Court.[4]

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That's it. That's the question.

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[3] These data are not available on the github repository, but you can find them easily at the SCDB site, and the code to get them is widely available from earlier in the semester.

[4] Here, interpret "become more moderate in their voting" as "their liberal voting percentage gets closer to 50 percent."

**Logistics**

- This final exam is worth a total of 400 points. Each of the three answers will be scored out of a possible 200 points; the highest two scores of the three will be retained, and comprise your grade on the exam.

- *Students who are completing course papers / projects do not need to take the final exam.*

- Answers should take the form of **short essays**, of perhaps 3-4 paragraphs in length. In each, make clear in your own words (a) what you believe is the answer to the question, and (b) on what analyses you rely to come to that answer. You should use plots, tables, or any other approaches to answer the questions.

- You may use any resources (notes, library-based, web-based, etc.) at your disposal; this is an "open-everything" exam.

- At the same time, exams are to be completed **individually, not collaboratively**; you are on your honor to work alone.

- Your examination is to be submitted **electronically**, by e-mailing it to `zorn@psu.edu`.

- Your exam should have the following characteristics:

  - **It should be in Adobe PDF format.**
  - It should display your full name on it.
  - It should indicate clearly which three of the five questions above you chose to answer.
  - It should include the code used to conduct all your analyses. This can be in the form of (a) a separate file (`.R` or `.pdf`), an appendix to your exam answers, or an `.Rmd` file.

- If you have questions, the instructor can be reached at `zorn@psu.edu`. Note, however, that questions that would compromise the integrity of the exam process (e.g., by giving you information that would advantage you relative to other students) will not be answered.

- The examination is due at **11:59:59 p.m. ET** on **Thursday, May 6, 2021**.