# Sarah B. Bouchat

CONTACT
INFORMATION

110 North Hall
1050 Bascom Mall
Madison, WI 53706

Phone: +1 412 977 1405
E-mail: bouchat@wisc.edu
Website: http://bouchat.github.io

EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON

Ph.D., Political Science                                                                    Expected 2017
*Fields:* Comparative Politics, Political Methodology

M.A., Agricultural & Applied Economics                                                              2016

M.A., Political Science                                                                              2013

HARVARD UNIVERSITY–JOHN F. KENNEDY SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT

Master in Public Policy                                                                             2011
*Concentration:* Democracy, Politics, and Institutions

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

A.B., International Studies (with General and Departmental Honors)                                   2008

ADDITIONAL
TRAINING

EMPIRICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THEORETICAL MODELS                                              Summer 2016

IPSA–NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE—SUMMER METHODS SCHOOL

Bayesian Analysis                                                                        Summer 2015

SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES SUMMER INSTITUTE

Intermediate Burmese                                                                     Summer 2014
Beginning Burmese                                                                        Summer 2013
Beginning Khmer                                                                          Summer 2006

DISSERTATION

*Title:* Common Knowledge: Elicited Priors and Low-Information Environments

*Committee:* Melanie Manion (Co-Chair), Scott Gehlbach (Co-Chair), Alexander Tahk, Rikhil
Bhavnani, Ian Coxhead (Agricultural & Applied Economics), Edmund Malesky (Duke University)

*Abstract:* My dissertation addresses the question: how can divergent prior knowledge be applied
to the study of political questions? Determining effective ways to utilize the information experts
provide is an important step in bridging quantitative and qualitative analyses—particularly in
authoritarian and underdeveloped contexts, where qualitative researchers have significant prior
experience but quantitative researchers are beginning to overcome data challenges. In a Bayesian
context, elicited priors utilize the substantive knowledge of experts, through interviews or pub-
lished research, to improve the accuracy of posterior estimates. My dissertation draws on machine
learning methods to propose a new way to aggregate elicited priors—a way that improves statis-
tical analyses and takes into consideration the much greater variation in "expertise" extant in the
social sciences, and especially in authoritarian and underdeveloped contexts. I apply this method
directly to a small dataset of the participation of Myanmar members of parliament (MPs) to show
that the method allows for better estimation of a complex model even using small $n$ data. The
method also uncovers motivations of MPs under authoritarianism that are more complex than
previous work has led us to believe. I also apply the method in a study of US elections in order
to assess what "expertise" is ideal for use in elicited-priors applications.

WORKING PAPERS

"Engaging Experts: Dealing with Divergent Elicited Priors in Political Science "
"Careers & Causes: Participation in Authoritarian Legislatures"

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| AWARDS AND | Center for Southeast Asian Studies Field Research Grant, University of Wisconsin–Madison | 2016 |
| FELLOWSHIPS | Summer Initiative Funding, University of Wisconsin–Madison | 2016 |
| | Fulbright Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Fellowship (declined) | 2015 |
| | Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship (Academic Year), Burmese | 2015–2016 |
| | Honorable Mention, Association for Asian Studies Usha Mahajani Award | 2014 |
| | Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship (Academic Year), Thai (declined) | 2014–2015 |
| | Foreign Language & Area Studies Fellowship (Summer), Burmese | 2014 |
| | Center for Southeast Asian Studies Field Research Grant, University of Wisconsin–Madison | 2014 |
| | Summer Initiative Funding, University of Wisconsin–Madison | 2014 |
| | Leon D. Epstein Graduate Fellowship, University of Wisconsin–Madison | 2013–2014 |
| | Nominated, Association for Asian Studies Usha Mahajani Award | 2013 |
| | Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship (Summer), Burmese | 2013 |
| | Summer Initiative Funding, University of Wisconsin–Madison | 2013 |
| | University Fellowship, University of Wisconsin–Madison | 2012–2013, 2016–2017 |
| | Nominated, Best Policy Analysis Exercise (MPP thesis) | 2011 |
| | Carr Center for Human Rights Policy PAE Research Grant | 2010 |
| | Traub-Dicker Summer Research Fellowship | 2010 |
| | Kennedy School Grant | 2009–2011 |
| | Howell Murray Award, University of Chicago | 2008 |
| | Maroon Key Society, University of Chicago | 2007–2008 |
| | College Outstanding New Leader Award | 2007 |
| | Human Rights Program Internship Award, University of Chicago | 2007 |
| | Southeast Asian Studies Summer Institute Tuition Fellowship | 2006 |
| | Dean's List, University of Chicago | 2005–2008 |
| | | |
| PRESENTATIONS | International Methods Colloquium, Invited Speaker | 2016 |
| | International Burma Studies Conference | 2016 |
| | American Political Science Association Annual Conference | 2016 |
| | Society for Political Methodology Conference, Poster Presenter | 2016 |
| | Empirical Implications of Theoretical Models Ending Conference | 2016 |
| | Midwest Political Science Association | 2015–2017 |
| | Association for Asian Studies Annual Meeting | 2016 |
| | Burma/Myanmar in Transition Conference, Lingnan University | 2015 |
| | University of Wisconsin–Madison Comparative Politics Colloquium | 2014 |
| | University of Wisconsin–Madison Experimental Politics Workshop | 2014 |
| | Foreign Policy Association Great Decisions Series—Myanmar | 2013 |
| | Harvard Gay Rights as Human Rights Conference | 2011 |
| | Face Value Campaign Advisory Board Convening | 2010 |
| | National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education | 2007 |

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON
*Lecturer*

| | |
|---|---|
| Introduction to Statistical Computing in Political Science | Spring 2017 |

*Instructor*

| | |
|---|---|
| Political Science Dept. Incoming Student Math Camp | Summer 2016 |
| Political Science Dept. Incoming Student Math Camp | Summer 2015 |

*Teaching/Lab Assistant*

| | |
|---|---|
| Game Theory & Political Analysis (graduate, Prof. Alex Tahk) | Spring 2015 |
| Maximum Likelihood Estimation (graduate, Prof. John Ahlquist) | Fall 2014 |
| Introduction to Statistics in Political Science (graduate, Prof. Alex Tahk) | Fall 2014 |

*Grader*

Political Inequality (undergraduate, Prof. Rikhil Bhavnani)          Fall 2015

HARVARD UNIVERSITY
*Course Material Design*

Political Corruption (undergraduate, Profs. Jim Alt and Daniel Ziblatt)          Fall 2013

*Instructor/Trainer*

Harvard Law School Advocates for Human Rights          2009


RESEARCH
EXPERIENCE

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON—LAW SCHOOL          Madison, WI
*Research Assistant, Professor Jason Yackee*          Summer 2016

- Designed R script to conduct a text analysis and comparison of the language in bilaterial treaties between developed and developing nations

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON—POLITICAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT          Madison, WI
*Research Assistant, Professor John Ahlquist*          Summer 2015

- Wrote R script to clean and merge over 480 survey datasets from the World Bank for a study of informal sector performance worldwide

HARVARD UNIVERSITY—DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT          Cambridge, MA
*Research Assistant, Professor James Alt*          Summer 2011, Summer 2013

- Composed lectures and slides for a Fall 2013 undergraduate political corruption course on topics including: US Political Machines, Legislative Corruption, Campaign Finance, Bureaucratic Corruption, Civil Service Reform, Foreign Aid, Natural Resources & Kleptocracy, and Transparency

UNU—WORLDWIDE INSTITUTE FOR DEVELOPMENT ECONOMICS RESEARCH          Helsinki, Finland
*Research Assistant, Professors Rikhil Bhavnani and Kate Baldwin*          June–Oct. 2012

- Constructed a database of secondary analyses of political experiments
- Conducted outreach to academics and researchers to solicit articles for inclusion in the database

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR DEMOCRACY          Washington, DC
*Research Associate, Reagan-Fascell Democracy Fellows Program*          Sept. 2011–July 2012

- Assisted fellows from Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Ethiopia, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Russia, Tibet, and the United States with research design and data collection on issues including electoral autocracy, democracy assistance and aid, civil society, liberation technology, and political parties
- Reviewed literature on electoral autocracy and rent-seeking, especially in the Caucasus
- Identified articles and books to assist in constructing syllabi about social capital, civil society engagement, and democratization for Russian university students, and women and gender studies for Tibetan college students in India

HARVARD UNIVERSITY—CARR CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY          Cambridge, MA
*Research Associate*          2010–2011

- Composed case studies of media and messaging strategies from historical US social movements to inform a public service advertising campaign combating LGBTQ stigma
- Co-facilitated a biweekly study group on human rights and social movements
- Managed logistics and volunteers for the 2011 Gay Rights as Human Rights Conference, with more than 125 participants and 30 presenters

*Traub-Dicker Fellow*          Summer 2010

- Conducted independent research on Singapore civil society organization tactics

*Associate Fellow*                                                                         2009–2010
- Compiled and analyzed US polling and public opinion data about anti-LGBTQ bias
- Created a presentation of goals and research as a fundraising mechanism for the nonprofit Face Value Project

*Intern*                                                                                  Summer 2009
- Reviewed public health and sociology literature on the welfare of LGBTQ youth in schools to support a campaign for Massachusetts K-12 anti-bullying curricula
- Assisted in developing and editing a survey of Myanmar democracy activists

BÜNDNIS FÜR DEMOKRATIE UND TOLERANZ                                          Berlin, Germany
*Human Rights Intern*                                                                     Summer 2007
- Devised impact measures to evaluate over 150 NGO immigrant rights projects
- Developed recommendations for a national tolerance campaign based on prior NGO projects
- Designed judgment guidelines and tracked submissions for the 2007 "Best Practices" NGO tolerance campaign competition

INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Myanmar                                                                          Dec. 2014–Jan. 2015
- Conducted preliminary dissertation fieldwork, including interviews with civil society representatives and historical research at the Myanmar National Archives in Yangon

Hong Kong SAR                                                                    Dec. 2010–Jan. 2011
- Conducted semi-structured interviews with civil society activists for master's thesis research examining social movement strategies in nondemocratic contexts

Germany                                                                           June–Sept. 2007
- Served as a Human Rights Intern with the Bündnis für Demokratie und Toleranz for 3 months through the University of Chicago Human Rights Internship Program

Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar                                                       Aug.–Sept. 2006
- Developed international advocacy strategies in collaboration with representatives of over 20 grassroots democracy organizations in Bangkok, Chiang Mai, and Mae Sot as a Free Burma Project/U.S. Campaign for Burma Delegate

AFFILIATIONS

Member, American Political Science Association                                    2012–present
Member, Midwest Political Science Association                                     2012–present
Member, Association for Asian Studies                                             2012–present
Advisor, Harvard University Carr Center Sexuality, Gender & Human Rights Program 2012–present

SKILLS

*Languages*: German (Advanced), Burmese (Advanced), Khmer (Beginner), Eastern Armenian (Beginner)
*Computer*: Mac OSX, Windows 10, R, LaTeX, Stan, STATA, SPSS, C++ (beginner)

REFERENCES

Scott Gehlbach (Co-Chair)                          Melanie Manion (Co-Chair)
Professor and Romnes Faculty Fellow                Vor Broker Family Professor
Dept. of Political Science                         Dept. of Political Science
University of Wisconsin–Madison                    Duke University
gehlbach@polisci.wisc.edu                          melanie.manion@duke.edu

Alexander Tahk
Assistant Professor
Dept. of Political Science
University of Wisconsin–Madison
atahk@wisc.edu