

Francisco Cantú

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ACADEMIC POSITION

Assistant Professor. Department of Political Science, University of Houston, 2013-

EDUCATION

Ph.D., Political Science, University of California, San Diego, 2013.
B.A., Political Science, Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México, 2004.

PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

Francisco Cantú. "Groceries for Votes: The Electoral Returns of Vote Buying." *The Journal of Politics*, forthcoming

Christopher B. Mann, Gayle A. Alberda, Nathaniel A. Birkhead, Yu Ouyang, Chloe Singer, Charles Stewart III, Michael C. Herron, Emily Beaulieu, Frederick Boehmke, Joshua Boston, Francisco Cantú, Rachael Cobb, David Darmofal, Thomas C. Ellington, Charles J. Finocchiaro, Michael Gilbert, Victor Haynes, Brian Janssen, David Kimball, Charles Kromkowski, Elena Llaudet, Matthew R. Miles, David Miller, Lindsay Nielson, Costas Panagopoulos, Andrew Reeves, Min Hee Seo, Haley Simmons, Corwin Smidt, Robert Stein, Rachel VanSickle-Ward, Abby K. Wood, and Julie Wronski. "Pedagogical Value of Polling Place Observation By Students." *PS: Political Science & Politics*, forthcoming

Jorge Fernandes, Pedro Riera, and Francisco Cantú. "The Politics of Committee Chairs Assignment in Ireland and Spain." *Parliamentary Affairs*, forthcoming

Pedro Riera, and Francisco Cantú "Determinants of Legislative Committee Membership in Proportional Representation Systems." *Party Politics*, forthcoming

Francisco Cantú and Sandra Ley. "Poll Worker Recruitment: Evidence from the Mexican Case." *Election Law Journal*, Vol. 16, No. 4: 495-510, 2017

Francisco Cantú and Verónica Hoyo. "México, 2016: El Declive de la Confianza Institucional." *Revista de Ciencia Política*, Vol. 37, No. 2: 493-519, 2017

Susan Achury (UH grad student), Margarita Ramírez (UH grad student), and Francisco Cantú. "Endogenous Ballot Structures: The Selection of Open and Closed Lists in Colombia's Legislative Elections." *Electoral Studies*, Vol 49: 136-154, 2017

Francisco Cantú, Verónica Hoyo, and Marco Morales. "The Utility of Unpacking Survey Bias in Multiparty Elections." *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, Vol. 28, No. 1: 96-116, 2016

Francisco Cantú and Omar García-Ponce. "Partisan Losers' Effects: Perceptions of Electoral Integrity in Mexico." *Electoral Studies*, Vol 39: 1-13, 2015

Francisco Cantú. "Identifying Electoral Irregularities in Mexican Local Elections." *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 58, No. 4: 936-951, 2014

Francisco Cantú, Scott Desposato, and Eric Magar. "Methodological Considerations for Students of

Mexican Legislative Politics: Selection Bias in Roll-Call Publications." *Política y Gobierno*, Vol. XXI, No. 1, 2014

Francisco Cantú and Scott Desposato. "The New Federalism of Mexico's Party System." *Journal of Politics in Latin America*, Vol. 19, No. 4: 3-38, 2012

Francisco Cantú and Sebastián Saiegh. "Fraudulent Democracy? An Analysis of Argentina's Infamous Decade using Supervised Machine Learning." *Political Analysis*, Vol. 19, No. 4: 409-433, 2011

WORK IN PROGRESS Francisco Cantú. "The Fingerprints of Fraud: Evidence from Mexico's 1988 Presidential Election."

- Invitation to revise and resubmit at *American Political Science Review*
- Resubmitted June 2018

Paul Schuler, Dimitar Gueorguiev and Francisco Cantú. "Window of Opportunity: The Short-term and Long-term Effects of Multi-party Elections on Democratic Regime Change."

- Submitted March 2018

Leonardo Antenangeli (UH grad student) and Francisco Cantú. "Right On Time: An Electoral Audit for the Publication of Vote Results."

- To be submitted Summer 2018

Michelle Torres (WashU grad student) and Francisco Cantú. "Learning to See: Visual Analysis for Social Science"

- To be presented at APSA Conference 2018

Francisco Cantú and Javier Márquez. "Do Polls Move Electoral Preferences? Evidence from a Survey Experiment"

- Experiment to be fielded June 2018

Agustina Haime (Rice grad student) and Francisco Cantú. "Negative Partisanship in Latin America"

- Survey question proposal submitted to the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) on February 2018
- Grant proposals to be submitted Fall 2018
- Preliminary results to be presented at APSA Conference 2018

Francisco Cantú and Pedro Riera. "The Impact of Electoral Systems on Ideological Voting"

- To be presented at EPSA Conference 2018
- To be presented at APSA Conference 2018

TEACHING

Graduate: Seminar in Comparative Elections, Introduction to Game Theory.

Undergraduate: Introduction to Comparative Politics, Comparative Elections, Politics of Mexico, Latin American Politics, Politics in the Southern Cone of Latin America. Institutional Change: Limits and Opportunities (Universidad del Rosario, Bogotá. Summer, 2016).

FELLOWSHIPS AND GRANTS

Grants: UH Provost Travel Grant (2016, 2017); UH Research Progress Grant (2015); UH Research Small Grant (2015); UH New Faculty Grant (2014); UCSD Center for Iberian and Latin American Studies (2010).

Fellowships and Scholarships: Mexican Ministry of Education (2007-2010), National Counsel of Science and Technology (2007-2012), Bret Harte International Fellowship (2007-2008), ITAM Tuition Scholarship (2000-2003).

CONFERENCE
PRESENTATIONS
AND TALKS

Conferences: American Political Science Association (2010-14, 2016-17); Midwest Political Science Association (2009-2017); Latin American Studies Association (2018); Texas Conference on Political Methodology (2018); Society of Political Methodology (2017); Southern Political Science Association (2017); Institutional Change: The Origins and Evolution of Political Institutions, SciencesPo (2016); The Making Electoral Democracy Work Project's Workshop (2014); Analyzing Politics of Latin America, UH (2014); Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies Corruption Symposium (2013); Graduate Student Conference in Comparative Politics, UCLA (2012); Southern California Comparative Political Institutions, USC (2012); Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, UCSD (2010); The Alexander Hamilton Center for Political Economy, NYU (2010).

Talks: William & Mary (2018 - Scheduled); UT-Austin (2018 - Scheduled); UCSD (2018); ITAM (2018); MIT (2017); University of Oregon (2017); Instituto Nacional Electoral (2016); Rice University (2015); Washington University, St. Louis (2015); ITESM, Santa Fe (2015); Florida State University (2014); Universidad Católica Boliviana (2014); Fundación Milenio, La Paz (2014); University of Houston (2012); CIDE (2012); ITAM (2012); University of San Diego (2011).

MANUSCRIPT
REVIEWER

American Journal of Political Science, American Political Science Review, British Journal of Political Science, Bulletin for Latin American Research, Comparative Political Studies, Democratization, Economics & Politics, Electoral Studies, Inter-American Development Bank, International Journal of Public Opinion Research, Journal of Comparative Politics, Journal of Conflict Resolution, Journal of Political Science, Journal of Politics, Journal of Politics in Latin America, Latin American Politics and Society, Legislative Studies Quarterly, MIT Press, Oxford University Press, Perfiles Latinoamericanos, Political Analysis, Political Psychology, Political Research Quarterly, Political Science Research and Methods, Política y Gobierno, Publius: The Journal of Federalism, Research & Politics, Revista de Ciencia Política, Revista Mexicana de Sociología.

FACULTY SERVICE

Member: Graduate Studies Committee, Undergraduate Committee; Faculty co-sponsor: Latin American Politics Workshop; Conference co-organizer: "Analyzing Latin American Politics" (2014) and "The Political Economy of Elections" (2017).

Dissertation Committee Co-Chair: L. Antenangeli; Dissertation Committee Member: L. Allarakia, C. Huang, M. Ramírez (Political Science); D. Bostashvili, S. Chatterjee, P. Garófalo (Economics); Master Thesis Reader: J. Téllez-Rios (CIDE, Mexico City); Honor Thesis Committee Director: M. Ferreira; Honor Thesis Committee Reader: A. Lastra.

REFERENCES

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TENURE CANDIDATE'S STATEMENT
Francisco Cantú, University of Houston

Research

My research focuses on the empirical analysis of elections, a topic that intersects with comparative politics, political economy, and quantitative methodology. Most of my work centers on two substantive questions. First, how can we assess the integrity of an election? Second, how do formal institutions shape the behavior of voters, candidates, and parties?

To answer these questions, I have implemented a diverse set of tools. Many of my projects use novel empirical strategies on observational data. Others involve archival research and massive digitization. Currently, I am involved in a randomized field experiment in Mexico to assess the effect of information on electoral preferences. I am also developing an image recognition software that speeds the time for announcing the electoral results. My work contributes to the literature on election forensics by providing novel ways to identify electoral corruption, and it advances the study of comparative and Latin American politics.

A major part of my research studies the numerous ways in which political elites manipulate elections. One of my published articles proposes a way to spot irregularities at the polling station level in contemporary Mexican elections. In particular, I exploit a particular feature of the country's electoral code, which assigns precinct voters to polling stations according to their childhood surnames. After showing that political preferences are seldom correlated with voters' last names, I look for discrepancies in the results of the polling stations within each precinct. Using this approach, I provide quantitative evidence that candidates in three states benefited from irregularities during the 2010 gubernatorial elections. Similarly, an co-authored article published uses synthetic data to simulate potential electoral irregularities and find similar patterns in real election data. To illustrate this methodology, we use an original data set of electoral results in the province of Buenos Aires, Argentina, during the 1930s. Both projects introduced approaches to identify electoral manipulation that can be exported to other elections.

My most substantive contribution to this topic applies image analysis to identify blatant alterations to the vote tallies. For this project I study the 1988 presidential election in Mexico, an event often referred in the literature of comparative politics as the prototypical example of the way hegemonic regimes rely on fraud. Nevertheless, the existing evidence to validate the fraud allegations in this event is very limited, in part because the government never published the entire results and destroyed the ballots a few years after the election. Using a novel database with the images of all the vote tallies for this election stored in the National Archive in Mexico City, I analyze for the first time the results of all the polling stations open on July 6, 1988 and show that election officials inflated the vote results. For this analysis, I use Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN), a computer-aided detection system used for image-recognition problems, and identify blatant alterations in about a third of the vote tallies in the country. Other current projects also focus on empirically identifying other types of electoral irregularities. A forthcoming publication evaluates the electoral returns of vote buying. For this project I used data from Mexico's 2012 presidential election, where one of the parties distributed gift cards in exchange for electoral support. The empirical analysis provides evidence of a persuasive effect by the gift cards, though the magnitude of this effect was lower than what was claimed by pundits and opposition candidates. Another example is an ongoing project, co-authored with a graduate student, that proposes a method to assess the concerns of electoral fraud related to delays in the election result announcement. To do so, we model the time span for a polling station to report its electoral results, identify those

outlying observations, and assess their bias on the final outcome.

An extension of this work focuses on the relationship between electoral irregularities and citizens' attitudes and behavior. I have shown that voters' perception of electoral integrity depends not on the institutional settings of the process, but rather on whether the voter's candidate wins the election. Another co-authored article evaluates the effects of electoral violence on citizens' political participation in Mexico. Addressing the measurement problems when using self-reported participation, we answer this question by leveraging a citizen lottery to select those citizens in charge of serving as poll workers on election day. Our findings show that organized crime affects the probability for a citizen to accept an invitation to organize and oversee the operation of polling stations. The main results of this article received media coverage were covered via *InSight Crime*.

I am currently extending this research program in two ways. First, my book project seeks to explain the apparent disconnection between the evidence of electoral fraud and its public perceptions. I argue that voters in developing democracies have strong beliefs about the untruthfulness of the electoral process and that improvements to electoral administration have little impact on citizens' distrust. This project uses public opinion data on fraud perceptions during the past 25 years, and it compares electoral irregularities and public trust across Latin American countries. Second, I am involved in the development of an app to collect results from polling stations in real time. This project aims to ameliorate the unease of voters and candidates between the close of polls and the announcement of the results; a period that—as recent examples in Arizona, Peru, Argentina, or Honduras show—leads to doubts about the integrity of the election. This app will help citizens and election officials minimize the waiting time for the final announcement, increasing the public confidence in the results.

A second strand of my research explores how formal institutions shape the behavior of political actors. For example, a recent research project focuses on how electoral institutions affect the campaign strategies of candidates and parties. For instance, a co-authored article explores the conditions for parties to personalize electoral competition. The motivation of this project is inspired by frequent debate regarding the effect of the ballot structure (which allows citizens to express their preferences either among parties or for individual candidates) on the connection between candidates and voters. We revisit this debate by exploiting an unusual feature in Colombia's legislative elections, which affords parties the opportunity to present either an open or closed list, allowing their choices to vary across electoral districts and contests. We show that both open and closed lists can harmonize, rather than confront, the vote-seeking incentives of parties and candidates. However, the way in which each list type coordinates both goals depends substantially upon the party structure.

I am also involved in a long-term research agenda exploring the incentives for politicians to cultivate their personal reputation. My first two published articles on this topic evaluate the relationship between electoral systems and the types of parliamentary posts assigned to legislators. Using an original dataset of biographical information and committee allocation for legislators in five European countries, we provide evidence that distributive posts are more likely to be allocated to electorally vulnerable members of parliament. This effect is constrained to countries with candidate-centered electoral rules. An ongoing third project investigates the role of electoral institutions in moderating the influence of ideology on voter's choice.

In the future, I plan to extend this work in two ways. First, along with a grad student, I am exploring the overlooked role of negative partisanship as a heuristic cue in vote choice. Using observational and experimental data, our preliminary findings show that Latin American vot-

ers hold stable identities towards parties, and that negative identities are independent from anti-establishment attitudes. Second, I am currently working on a project studying the feedback-loop of electoral polls. With the collaboration of a pollster firm in Mexico, I use experimental evidence to study the effect of informing respondents about the aggregated electoral preferences on their reported answers.

Teaching

I have taught four different undergraduate courses. All these courses combine lectures with discussions of the assigned readings and news articles, film clips, and guest lecturers to actively engage students in learning and thinking about our topic outside the classroom. There are two specific efforts I do to enhance undergraduate student learning. First, I have adapted my teaching materials to make them accessible and affordable to every student. My syllabi ask students to read book excerpts and journal articles that imply no cost to students. Second, all my courses are designed to develop students' teaching skills. As a non-native speaker myself, I know that improving this ability can make a substantial difference for students' chances of getting a job or being accepted in Law School. All my undergraduate courses involve activities with the UH Writing Center, and the assignments are designed to detect the main deficiencies of students' writing, develop tools that can help students improving their writing skills, and track their individual progress throughout the semester. I was also involved in a multi-collaborative project involving undergraduate students to measure the waiting times at the polling stations during the 2016 National Election. The project was a great opportunity to increase students' interests on political science and the current challenges of American elections.

At the graduate level, my teaching interests lean toward my substantive research interests. I teach a seminar titled "Comparative Elections," which examines the interaction between voters and political representatives across different types of electoral rules, political institutions, and contextual factors. I also teach a graduate course of game theory that introduces students to games of non-cooperative interactions with complete and incomplete information. I have worked with several UH graduate students and co-author a couple of research manuscripts with them. I have also served on twelve comprehensive exam committees, three qualifying paper committees, five prospectus committees, and five dissertation committees.

Service

Over the course of these five years, I have served on three department committees: Graduate Studies, Undergraduate Studies, and Outreach. I was also involved on the changes to the graduate methods sequence. Moreover, I co-organized a conference on Latin American Politics in the Fall of 2014 and another on the Political Economy of Elections in the Spring of 2017. The latter conference was co-sponsored by the UH Economics department. I have also participated with other schools and academic departments within the University. This summer I presented some of my research during the talk and workshop series organized by the UH Data Science Institute. I have been honored serving as an external reader for thesis in the Honors College and as external member of three dissertation committees in the Economics department. I have also been involved in several activities with the Hobby School of Public Policy.

As for my service to the discipline, I have reviewed about sixty articles for about a twenty-five journals and three book manuscripts for two university press. I am also a regular discussant and chair in the American Political Science Association Conference and the Midwest Political Science

Association. Finally, I try to diffuse the contributions of the discipline to non-academic audiences. Last year, I gave a talk in the Houston Seminar, a lecture series held annually open to the public. I have also gave talks to electoral authorities in Bolivia and Mexico on the ways to safeguard the integrity of the elections.