

Gustavo Diaz

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February 09, 2023

Dear Members of the Search Committee,

I write to express my interest in your call for an Assistant Professor in Comparative Politics with a focus on the developing world. I am a postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Political Science at McMaster University. I specialize in comparative politics and quantitative methods. I received my PhD from the Department of Political Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign under the supervision of Jake Bowers, Matt Winters, Gisela Sin, and Avital Livny.

Substantively, I research political economy and political behavior with a focus on the challenges to accountability and representation in the developing world. Methodologically, I use tools from design-based causal inference and computational social science to develop standards to navigate research design tradeoffs in experiments and quasi-experiments.

My work is published in *World Development* and *The SAGE Handbook of Research Methods in Political Science and International Relations*. I have one solo-authored manuscript under revise and resubmit at the *Journal of Experimental Political Science*, and two forthcoming chapters in edited volumes.

My primary substantive research agenda examines the challenges to accountability and representation in the developing world. The core of this agenda is an original data collection effort in Brazil, combining text analysis and machine learning to construct the most comprehensive dataset of corruption infractions at the local level. This dataset informs several of my ongoing research projects. For example, in a solo-authored working paper, I argue that corruption revelation drives politicians in nearby municipalities to undertake preemptive behavior to ward off a negative reaction from their constituents. While previous literature suggests that partisans might react strategically to anticipate sanctions when their political party is linked to corruption, my work shows that this behavior is even more widespread, and that politicians fear being caught in an electoral anti-corruption wave even when there is no evidence of their own wrong-doing.

I also maintain a research program on the gendered electoral consequences of corruption with Kelly Senters Piazza (US Air Force Academy). In a forthcoming book chapter, we use my corruption infractions dataset to show how corruption revelation increases the proportion of female candidates running for mayor, but not their chances of winning elections. We attribute this to incumbents' incentives to counter the rise of female politicians. In another forthcoming chapter, we discuss the challenges and opportunities of different data sources to study gender and corruption.

This program extends toward the gendered evaluations of officeholders' performance in general. In a piece in *World Development*, we discuss how the COVID-19 pandemic has the potential to promote female political representation through increased discontent with the performance of male-led executives and by priming a health policy issue commonly associated with women. In work

under review with Virginia Oliveros (Tulane), Rebecca Weitz-Shapiro (Brown), and Matt Winters (Illinois), we use a survey experiment in Argentina to show gendered differential reactions to policy implementation.

My methodological research agenda uses the lessons from my substantive work to develop standards to navigate research design tradeoffs in experiments and quasi-experiments, focusing on practices to improve statistical precision before data collection. In a *SAGE Handbook* chapter with Christopher Grady (USAID) and Jim Kuklinski (Illinois), we discuss the merits and challenges of increasingly complex survey experimental designs that improve precision at the expense of ecological validity. In a solo-authored piece under **R&R**, I introduce new tools to assess the validity of estimates in double list experiments. This is a variant of the list experiment that promises more precise results but comes with under-explored questionnaire design complications. In a working paper with Jake Bowers (Illinois) and Christopher Grady, we discuss the circumstances under which researchers should prefer biased yet precise estimators to analyze experimental data, including applications to block-randomization and M-estimation. In a manuscript under review with Erin Rossiter (Notre Dame), we argue how the gains in precision from adopting good practices in experimental design, such as block randomization or repeated measurement of outcomes, can be offset by explicit or implicit sample loss.

My experience as a methodology and area studies postdoc at two separate institutions has given me the opportunity to teach courses in comparative politics and quantitative methods. At McMaster, I teach an applied research design course that emphasizes causal inference for public opinion and public policy. At Tulane, I taught an introductory course in comparative politics and a senior seminar on the challenges of developing democracies from an evidence-informed policy perspective. My work as the methods editorial assistant for the *American Political Science Review* also puts me in a unique position to gain exposure to the most current methods in the field, awareness of which I can incorporate into my teaching and mentoring.

My time at Illinois also gave me extensive teaching experience. I taught an online course on the politics of developing countries as an independent instructor and served as a teaching assistant for its in-person version. I also served as a teaching assistant for quantitative research methods courses at the undergraduate and PhD levels using a flipped classroom approach. These experiences have prepared me to teach to a diverse student body and to adapt to both online and in-person platforms.

I am prepared to teach courses on comparative politics, the politics of development, evidence-informed policy, research design, computational social science, and quantitative methods. You can find copies of current and sample syllabi in my website. As a first-generation scholar, my teaching philosophy emphasizes building flexible learning environments for students with different backgrounds and career goals.

I believe my expertise makes me an excellent fit at Mississippi State. If you have any questions, you can contact me via email or phone.

Sincerely,

Gustavo Diaz
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