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Assistant Professor Search, Climate Politics and Equitable Futures - AP
Cornell University
Ithaca, NY 14850

Dear Members of the Search Committee:

I am writing to express my interest in the assistant professor position in American and climate politics at Cornell. I am currently an assistant professor at the University of Connecticut in political science and was previously a postdoctoral research associate in the Center for the Study of Democratic Politics at Princeton University. I received my PhD in political science from Stony Brook University in August of 2020. I have 17 articles accepted or published in peer-reviewed journals in outlets such as *Nature Climate Change*, the *Journal of Politics*, and *Global Environmental Change*. My book *Climate Games: Experiments on How People Prevent Disaster* is forthcoming this spring with the University of Michigan Press.

I work at the intersection of climate change and governance, studying how institutional design affects the ability of the public to hold their elected officials accountable and their support for climate policy. I have collaborated with scholars across the social and physical sciences, and my work has been cited throughout the sixth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. My current position at the University of Connecticut is in political science, but additionally part of a cluster hire in environmental studies where I contribute research and teaching on the public policy process in the context of climate change. My research, teaching, and experience providing policy-relevant insights outside of academia all make me well suited to join a cluster hire focused on climate politics.

The first branch of my research is on effective governance of climate change mitigation and disaster prevention. I use incentivized experiments: Lab experiments in which participants make strategic decisions that determine how much money they earn at the end of the study. Real-world politics are highly complex, making it difficult to identify the causal effect of any policy design on behavior. Incentivized experiments allow me to isolate the effect of a specific institutional change in a controlled environment, testing precise hypotheses about how people will respond. Further, by comparing participant behavior to game theoretic equilibria, I identify when people stray from optimal choices and test hypotheses about voter decision-making.

The centerpiece of this work is my book *Climate Games*, where my coauthors Andrew Delton, Reuben Kline, and I use incentivized experiments to understand how the different strategic features of climate change help or hinder climate change mitigation. We identify how to design institutions to efficiently and effectively slow climate change. We tackle questions such as: Under what conditions will rich actors help poorer actors avoid disaster? What features of a carbon tax make it most palatable to voters What features of a carbon tax make it most palatable

to voters? Across experiments, we find that people are consistently willing to pay more than the game theoretic equilibria to help stop simulated climate change. Despite different political affiliations, varying climate change attitudes, differences in education, and more, we find policy design is critical in helping people navigate complex mitigation choices and identify effective strategies to avert disaster. My first writing sample is a paper, published in the *Journal of Politics*, applying these methods to identify how institutional design can increase public support for spending on disaster prevention.

In the second branch of my research agenda, I look outside of the lab to study how policy design and the changing environment interact with individuals' beliefs and attitudes to shape environmental policy support. For example, in my second writing sample "Inaccurate beliefs undermine support for solutions after disaster," I show that when the public holds policy-specific inaccurate beliefs, focusing events can mobilize support for policies that inadvertently exacerbate the underlying problem. I illustrate this dynamic with the case of climate disaster. Leveraging Hurricane Sandy as a natural experiment, I find those affected by the storm are more likely to believe in climate change but oppose mitigation policies they incorrectly believe make climate change worse. This work is under review at *Public Opinion Quarterly*.

My research on climate governance has already received attention both inside and outside of academia. For example, I received the award for best paper published in *Risk Analysis* in 2022. Because of my expertise in climate change public opinion, I was invited to join an interdisciplinary team to identify the determinants of climate change literacy across Africa. Our work has been published in outlets such as *Nature Climate Change* and *Climate Risk Management.* My research has also been cited throughout recent reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the United Nations body responsible for synthesizing the state of our knowledge on climate change. This fall, I will be speaking at a symposium for policymakers in Washington, D.C. on the governance of solar geoengineering.

Included in my application materials are my curriculum vitae, teaching evaluations, statement on fostering learning, research, and outreach in a diverse community, and writing samples. My writing sample includes two manuscripts, illustrating my multimethod approach combining incentivized, survey, and natural experiments, as well as public opinion data to understand climate policy. Thank you in advance for your consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you. Please contact me at talbot.andrews@uconn.edu or at (971) 235-1709 if you need any additional information.

Sincerely,

Talbot Andrews

Talbot M. Andrews