

# Academic Proposal

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I am a political economist studying how democracies can govern artificial intelligence. My research combines experimental methods with computational modeling to understand how citizens form preferences about emerging technologies and what this means for democratic governance. My training spans political science, economics, and public policy, and my prior experience as an Economic Analyst at the Chilean Ministry of Finance grounds my work in the realities of policy implementation. In the rest of this statement, I outline my research agenda, teaching contributions, and alignment with the School of Government's mission.

Most accounts of automation politics assume economic self-interest drives policy preferences: workers whose jobs are threatened should demand government protection. My dissertation shows this model is incomplete. In a pre-registered experiment with approximately 1,000 U.S. workers, I find that information about automation risk changes policy preferences—but only conditionally. Demand for protective government policy is strongest among workers who trust expert sources, learn that their risk is higher than they expected, and possess high trait anxiety. Workers who distrust experts show no response regardless of their risk level; those who trust experts but receive confirming information show weak effects. This matters for policy: effective risk communication requires credible sources reaching psychologically receptive audiences.

**Research Agenda. Near Term (Years 1–2).** My immediate priorities are publishing my dissertation work in top academic venues and launching Chile-focused research. My job market paper, “*The Conditional Activation Model: Uncovering Policy Demand Responses to AI-Driven Automation*,” formalizes and tests the conditional structure described above. I plan to extend this work in Chile, testing whether the two-gate structure holds in a context with different baseline levels of expert trust, and experimentally manipulating source credibility—varying whether automation risk information comes from academic experts, government agencies, or industry sources. A second chapter, co-authored with Oleg Smirnov, uses exploratory factor analysis to map the structure of AI attitudes in the mass public—identifying distinct dimensions of concern that current policy debates conflate. A third chapter develops an agent-based model of AI-augmented democratic deliberation, examining conditions under which algorithmic mediation improves or degrades collective decision-making. These chapters target journals in political behavior, public opinion, and computational social science.

In Chile, I will replicate my automation-policy experiments using nationally representative samples and Chilean labor market data, contributing to the School’s priorities in *economic and social development* and *social inequalities*—since automation risk falls disproportionately on lower-skilled workers. My experience as an Economic Analyst at the Ministry of Finance (2018–2021) gives me familiarity with Chilean administrative data infrastructure and policy processes. I will also develop and validate Spanish-language instruments for measuring AI attitudes, enabling comparative research across Latin America. Funding will come from FONDECYT Iniciación, building on my experience securing approximately \$11,000 in competitive research grants from U.S. sources.

**Medium Term (Years 3–5).** I will expand the research program along two fronts. First, I will extend experimental work on human-AI cooperation. A working paper with Reuben Kline and Akhil Ponda—presented at APSA, Oxford’s “Talking to Machines” workshop, and IMEBESS—examines how communication with AI agents affects cooperation in social dilemmas. This research investigates how AI-mediated interaction shapes trust and collective action, with applications to designing systems that facilitate rather than displace human coordination.

Second, I will pursue applied research on AI-augmented deliberation, connecting to the School's priority in *institutions and quality of democratic governance*. Building on the theoretical foundation from my dissertation, I aim to partner with Chilean municipalities to pilot AI-augmented citizen consultations, leveraging Chile's experience with participatory budgeting and constitutional deliberation. This means AI systems designed to enhance citizen participation (summarizing public input, identifying areas of consensus, surfacing minority viewpoints) rather than replacing human judgment. I will collaborate with CENIA's human-centered AI research line, engage with officials implementing the National AI Policy, and contribute a social science perspective to MinCiencia's AI initiatives. Two years of interdisciplinary training through the NSF BIAS-NRT program, working alongside computer scientists and psychologists on joint projects, prepares me to translate across disciplinary boundaries.

**Long-Term Vision.** By year five, I aim to secure seed funding for a research cluster on AI and democratic governance, potentially a nucleus for a future Instituto Milenio. Natural partners include CENIA (technical AI research), the School of Engineering's AI researchers, and the Law School's regulation scholars. The first milestone would be a 2030 workshop bringing together Latin American researchers working at this intersection, establishing PUC as a regional convener. Throughout, my methodological commitments remain constant: pre-registered experiments, causal identification, and transparency.

**Teaching Offerings.** I can contribute to the School's curriculum in several areas. *Experimental Methods for Policy Research* (graduate or advanced undergraduate) would cover survey experiments, field experiments, and causal inference for policy evaluation. Students would replicate published studies, debugging code, confronting messy data, and experiencing the gap between methods sections and actual research. They would then design original experiments relevant to Chilean policy questions.

*AI, Technology, and Public Policy.* This course would examine automation and labor markets, regulatory models across jurisdictions, public opinion toward emerging technologies, and algorithmic accountability in government decisions. The approach combines technical literacy with governance frameworks, accessible to social science students without programming backgrounds. Course content draws directly from my dissertation and working papers, and would incorporate Chilean and Latin American cases. A future version could partner with Engineering for an interdisciplinary offering.

I am also prepared to teach *Behavioral Economics for Public Policy*, a prior version of which I taught at Finis Terrae University (2018–2020), and to supervise theses on technology policy, AI governance, and political behavior. My experience coordinating a team of ten research assistants at the Behavioral Political Economy Lab has prepared me to mentor students through the research process—from question formulation through publication.

**Alignment with the School of Government.** My research directly addresses the School's priority area in “Technology, artificial intelligence, and public policy.” Three dissertation chapters and multiple working papers focus on AI and democratic governance. My work also contributes to adjacent priorities: automation research addresses *economic and social development* and *social inequalities*; AI deliberation research speaks to *institutions and quality of democratic governance*; and my experimental approach models the applied empirical research the School values.

The School's interdisciplinary character matches my training in political science, economics, and public policy, as well as my methods, which bridge behavioral science and computational modeling. At PUC, I would seek collaborations with Engineering on algorithmic systems, with Law on regulatory frameworks, and with Sociology on the distributional consequences of technological change. I would welcome the opportunity to contribute to the School's work on technology and public policy, and to collaborate across faculties on questions that no single discipline can answer alone.