

James Szewczyk

PhD Student
Department of Political Science
Emory University

[Curriculum Vitae](#)

Contact Information:

Email: james.szewczyk@emory.edu

U.S. Mail:
Department of Political Science
Emory University
1555 Dickey Drive
Atlanta, Georgia 30322

Research Interests:

American politics, elections, public policy, representation

Working Papers:

“How Electoral Institutions Affect Political Accountability: Evidence from Vote-by-Mail in Washington”

In this paper, I develop a theory of how vote-by-mail increases the probability that voters obtain political information before voting, which induces incumbents behave competently and more in line with the interests of their constituents. Exploiting the staggered implementation of vote-by-mail in Washington and a number of sources of data, I utilize a difference-in-differences estimation strategy to test this theory on the behavior of voters and elected officials in the state. I find that vote-by-mail causes a decrease in ballot roll-off on statewide ballot measures in presidential election years, which is consistent with the theory that voters gather more information when voting in all-mail elections. Further, switching from traditional polling place elections to vote-by-mail results in a decrease in negative findings on accountability audit reports and a decrease in taxing and spending in Washington’s municipalities. Using data from the Catalist voter file I show that these results cannot be explained by changes in the composition of the electorate.

“The Effects of Community Income Inequality on Political Participation” (with Melody Crowder-Meyer)

Income inequality is on the rise in America, yet we know little about how economic inequality shapes political engagement. In this paper, we use the restricted data file from the 2012 American National Election Study and U.S. Census data to examine the effects of income inequality at the community level on individual and social forms of political participation. We theorize that inequality will have different effects on these two types of participation and that these effects will be conditioned by individual-level socioeconomic status. We find that for higher socioeconomic status individuals, greater income inequality increases both individual and social forms of participation, while increases in income inequality diminish social participation among those with low socioeconomic status. Our study indicates that rising levels of income inequality will perpetuate the participatory gap between high and low socioeconomic status individuals and lead to policies that further benefit higher status Americans over those with fewer resources.

“Voting Restrictions and Representation in Congress”



Figure 1:

In the United States, the Voting Rights Acts extended the franchise to blacks in the south, which had profound implications for representation and policy outcomes across all levels of government. However, in June of 2013 the Supreme Court ruled in the *Shelby County v. Holder* case that the formula for the preclearance provision of the law is unconstitutional. This allowed jurisdictions that were previously required to get approval from the federal government before changing election laws the ability to do so without supervision. In this paper, I show that the removal of the preclearance requirement resulted in these jurisdictions implementing more restrictive voting laws. Then, I use former preclearance status as an instrument for restrictive voting laws and find that in districts where the *Shelby County v. Holder* decision lead to more restrictive voting laws that these voting restrictions caused Republican members of Congress to cosponsor fewer bills related to civil rights issues.