

Preston R. Johnston

PhD Candidate
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Research interests

Comparative political economy and behavior; American political economy; climate change adaptation; insurance; money in politics

Education

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (2021-)

PhD Candidate, Political Science
Primary field: Political Economy. *Secondary field:* Quantitative Methods.
Grade: 4.0/4.0

Princeton University (2017-2021)

A.B. in Politics (*magna cum laude*)
Certificate in Statistics and Machine Learning
Grade: 3.83/4.0

Dissertation project

Working title: *Paying for Climate Change: The Politics of Insurance in a Warming World*

Dissertation committee: Kathleen Thelen (Chair; MIT), Evan Lieberman (MIT), Leah Stokes (UCSB), Devin Caughey (MIT)

Research in progress

- **Voters Uncovered: Home insurance availability, electoral backlash, and climate adaptation**
- **Ethnicity and Climate Dissensus in Africa** (with Evan Lieberman and Devin Caughey)
- **Pulling the Fire Alarm? Insurer corporate behavior under climate change**
- **Can You Stand the Heat? Ideology and individual-level climate adaptation in Brazil** (with Clemente T. Sanchez)

Teaching

2025:

- Teaching assistant for 17.802 Quantitative Research Methods II: Causal Inference (graduate; Prof. Daniel Hidalgo)

2024:

- Teaching assistant for 17.20 Introduction to American Politics (undergraduate; Prof. Devin Caughey)
- Global Diversity Lab (GDL) Pathways Program Summer Workshop: "How to read a quantitative social science paper." July 2024. Invited to give the workshop again in Summer 2025.

Conferences and workshop presentations

2025:

- Political Institutions and Political Economy collaborative (PIPE). December 2025 at the University of Southern California. For “Voters Uncovered: Home insurance availability, electoral backlash, and climate adaptation.”
- American Political Science Association (APSA). September 2025 in Vancouver, BC, Canada. For “Pulling the Fire Alarm? Insurer corporate political behavior on climate change.”
- Political Economy and Welfare Research Network Early Career Workshop. June 2025 at Temple University.
- Council for European Studies International Conference of Europeanists. June 2025 in Philadelphia, PA. Invited moderator and discussant for panel titled “The Green Firm.” Also accepted as part of proposed panel “Evolving Welfare States in Times of New Social Risks.” Presenting ongoing dissertation work, titled “Insurance as Climate Adaptation: Risk Incidence, Preferences, and Reforms.”
- MIT Center for International Studies (CIS) Global Climate Adaptation Workshop. April 2025 in Cambridge, MA. Invited participant in panel titled “Climate Negotiations and the Most Vulnerable: Toward COP 30 in Brazil” for “Ideology and Individual-Level Climate Adaptation in Brazil.”

2024:

- Seminar on State and Capitalism Since 1800. December 2024 at Harvard University. Invited discussant for Charnysh et al. “Place Not Race: Identities, Social Proximity and the Global Climate Emergency.”
- American Political Science Association (APSA). September 2024 in Philadelphia, PA. For “Ethnicity, Regionalism, and Attitudes about Climate Change in Africa” and “The Electoral Effects of Private Sector Positions: Evidence from the US House.”
- Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA). April 2024 in Chicago, IL. For “Company Towns? Labor Market Concentration, Antitrust Opinion, and Political Behavior.”
- Working Group in African Political Economy (WGAPE). March 2024 in Accra, Ghana. For “Ethnicity, Regionalism, and Attitudes about Climate Change in Africa.”

Grants and awards

2025:

- MIT Center for International Studies (CIS) PhD Student Summer Research Grant (\$5,000) to fund fieldwork in Australia

Service

- Co-organizer, Comparative Politics Work-in-Progress Workshop (CPWIP). Grad student CP and PE workshop. 2024-2025
- Graduate student council (GSC) department social chair 2022-2024

Research experience

- RA for Prof. Evan Lieberman (MIT) (Summer 2022; Summer 2023 - Spring 2024; Summer 2025); RA for Profs. Kathleen Thelen (MIT) and Alex Hertel-Fernandez (Columbia) (Fall 2025 - Spring 2026); RA for Prof. Chenzi Xu (Stanford) (Summer 2020 - Summer 2021); RA for Prof. Leonard Wantchekon (Princeton) (Summer 2021); RA for Prof. Matias Iaryczower (Princeton) (Summer 2019; Fall 2020)