

# Shreyas Meher

PhD Candidate in Public Policy & Political Economy

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## NSF Funded Research

Frameworks: Infrastructure for Political and Social Event Data Using Machine Learning

**Principal Investigator: Patrick T. Brandt**

**Grant Amount: \$1,589,016 - National Science Foundation [2023/08–2026/07]**

As a **Research Assistant** on this prestigious project, I am integral in applying **cutting-edge machine learning technologies** to revolutionize the extraction and analysis of event data for political and social sciences. This project specifically leverages advancements in **Large Language Models** like **ConflBERT**, which I help to fine-tune and expand into multilingual settings including Arabic and Spanish. My responsibilities include **developing training protocols, conducting model optimizations, and creating detailed tutorials using frameworks such as Hugging Face and PyTorch**. This role not only taps into my deep technical acumen but also my commitment to enhancing the global understanding of political dynamics through innovative data analysis techniques.

## Education

<b>The University of Texas at Dallas (UTD)</b> , Richardson, Texas	2020 - 2025 (Expected)
Ph.D. Public Policy and Political Economy	
Chair: Clint Peinhardt	
Committee: Pengfei Zhang (Co-Chair), Patrick Brandt	
Dissertation: The Intersection of Politics, Economics, and Digital Space: A Trilogy of Investigations	
<b>St. Xavier's College</b> , Mumbai, India	2018
M.S. Public Policy	
<b>Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies (NMIMS)</b> , Mumbai, India	2016
B.S. Economics	

## Research

### Research Fields

Comparative Politics, International Political Economy, Computational Social Science

### Research Topics

Content Moderation, Internet Censorship, Political Conflict and Violence

## Working Papers

**Democracy and Internet Control** (with Pengfei Zhang) – Examining content control in democracies, revealing a unique approach compared to authoritarian regimes.

**Two Types of Censorship? An Assessment of the Informational Autocracy Thesis in the**

**Online Space** – Classifying autocratic internet filtering practices into distinct regimes and their implications.

**How do Interest Groups adapt their Communication Strategy to Big Shocks? An analysis of the Medicare-For-All Debate on Twitter during COVID-19.** (With Sushant Kumar & Pengfei Zhang) – Analyzing the contrasting social media strategies of health advocacy groups on Medicare-For-All during COVID-19, revealing the impact of narrative styles on public engagement and policy debate.

**Expanding the Horizons** – Investigating the dynamics of international organizations through the lens of network structures.

**Introducing the ConflBERT Family of Language Models for Political Science** (with Patrick Brandt, Vito D'Orazio & Javier Osorio) – Introducing ConflBERT, a specialized LLM for analyzing political violence and conflict, demonstrating superior performance and potential for multilingual expansion.

**Populism and the Price of Abandonment: Analyzing the Exit Dynamics from Bilateral Investment Treaties** (With Clint Peinhardt) – Exploring the interplay between populist policies and the economic implications of withdrawing from international investment treaties.

## Dissertation

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**Democracy and Internet Control: Theory and Evidence from Transparency Reports** – Analyzes democratic approaches to internet censorship using data from Google and Twitter, revealing subtle yet significant content moderation strategies.

**Two Types of Censorship? An Assessment of the Informational Autocracy Thesis in the Online Space** – Testing how Guriev & Triesman's IA theory holds in the realm of internet filtering practices in autocratic nations.

**The Politics of Internet Blackouts: Investigating Digital Repression during the 2021 Farmer Protests in India** – Focuses on India's use of internet blackouts as a control mechanism during the 2021 Farmer Protests, highlighting the tactics of digital repression in a democratic context.

## Teaching Experience

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**Instructor** for EPPS Math & Coding Camp August 2024

- Taught coding section for incoming PhD students over a 5-day intensive program
- Covered topics including R programming, data manipulation, visualization, and linear regression
- Designed and delivered hands-on sessions on RStudio, ggplot2, and dplyr

## Teaching Assistant for

**EPPS 2301** - Research Design in the Social and Policy Sciences Fall 2020

**SOC 4302** - Class, Status, and Power Fall 2020

**IPEC 4301** - Political Economy of Industrialized Countries Spring 2021

<b>PSCI 4396</b> - Selected Topics in Government and Politics (Afghanistan)	Fall 2021
<b>EPPS 6316</b> - Applied Regression	Spring 2022
<b>PPPE 6302/PSCI 6302</b> - Political Violence and Conflict in Cyberspace	Fall 2022
<b>EPPS 6313</b> - Introduction to Quantitative Methods	Fall 2022
<b>IPEC/PSCI 4318</b> - Foreign Aid and Development	Spring 2023

## Conference Presentations

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International Studies Association (ISA)	Chicago, 2025
Association for Public Policy and Management (APPAM)	Washington DC, 2024
Society for Institutional & Organizational Economics (SIOE)	Chicago, 2024
American Political Science Association (APSA)	Philadelphia, 2024
Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA)	Chicago, 2024
UTD PPPE Working Paper Series	Richardson, 2023
NAPE, Houston	Houston, 2020

## Honors & Awards

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<b>University of Texas at Dallas (UTD)</b> , Richardson, Texas	
The Colloquium for the Advancement of Free-Enterprise Education (CAFÉ) research scholar	2020
Dean's Excellence Scholarship	2020

## Book Contributions

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<i>Cognella Publishing</i> , American Government & State and Local Government	2021
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## Skills and Languages

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<b>Skills:</b> R, STATA, PYTHON, L <sup>A</sup> T <sub>E</sub> X, ARCGIS, C++
<b>Languages:</b> English (Fluent), Marathi (Fluent in reading and writing), Hindi (Fluent in reading and writing), French (Beginner)

## References

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### **Patrick T. Brandt**

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and Political Science  
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### **Clint Peinhardt**

UT System Regents' Outstanding Teacher  
Professor of Political Science, Public Policy and  
Political Economy  
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Economy  
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### **Pengfei Zhang**

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