

# Zachary Esses Johnson, M.Sc., M.P.P., J.D.

Quant Methods and Political Economy Doctoral Student at the University of Virginia

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## Research Interests

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**Methods:** Computational Statistics, Optimization, Latent Factor Analysis and Measurement

**Substantive:** Political Economy, Taxation, Public Finance, Migration

## Thesis

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**The House Always Wins: Housing, Migration, and Political Advantage**

Chair: David Leblang, Ph.D.

## Education

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**Doctor of Philosophy, Political Science** 2023 – 2028  
University of Virginia, Charlottesville, USA

**Master of Public Policy** 2021 – 2023  
University of Southern California, Los Angeles, USA

**Master of Science, Behavioral Science** 2020 – 2021  
London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK

**Juris Doctor** 2014 – 2017  
University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada

**Bachelor of Arts with Distinction, Political Science** 2011 – 2014  
University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada

## Professional Experience

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**Lead Quantitative Methodologist**, The Miller Center for Public Affairs 2024 – Present  
Global Democracy and Capitalism Index

- Leading statistical design of an economic index quantifying institutional alignment across 190+ countries for finance and risk applications.
- Developed multi-level PCA and latent factor model using R.

**Summer Intern**, The Tax Foundation 2023

- Researched comparative state and local tax structures and authored policy briefs using internal tax datasets.
- Assisted with drafting reports and data visualizations on corporate and personal income tax reforms.

**Associate Lawyer**, Legacy Tax + Trust Lawyers 2018 – 2020

- Advised high-net-worth clients on cross-border tax strategies and estate planning.
- Collaborated with advisors to reduce tax exposure and ensure trust compliance.

- Drafted legal memoranda on tax planning, trust restructuring, and regulatory compliance.

**Articling Student**, DLA Piper LLP 2017 – 2018

- Conducted legal research and drafted memoranda in corporate law, tax, and litigation.
- Supported senior counsel in preparing briefs and compliance materials for corporate hearings.
- Participated in due diligence for cross-border corporate transactions and estate matters.

## Research Experience

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**Research Assistant**, Department of Politics, University of Virginia 2025 - Present  
Supervisor: David Leblang, Ph.D.

**Research Assistant**, Department of Politics, University of Virginia 2024  
Supervisor: Carol Mershon, Ph.D.

**Research Assistant**, Department of Politics, University of Virginia 2023  
Supervisor: Albert Rivero, J.D., Ph.D.

**Research Assistant**, Gould School of Law, University of Southern California 2022 – 2023  
Supervisors: Abby Wood, J.D., Ph.D., and Pamela McCann, Ph.D.

**Research Student**, London School of Economics 2021  
Supervisor: Liam Delaney, Ph.D.  
Project: Behavioral Science & National Preparedness for Risks

## Teaching Experience

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**Teaching Assistant**, University of Virginia 2025 - Present  
Class: Introduction to International Relations (Undergraduate)

**Teaching Assistant and Co-Instructor**, University of Virginia 2025  
Class: Regression Analysis (Doctoral)  
Instructor of R Statistical Computing Class

**Teaching Assistant**, University of Virginia 2024  
Class: Indian and Pakistani Politics (Undergraduate)

**Course Grader**, University of Southern California 2023  
Class: Public Financial Management and Budgeting (Masters)

**Course Grader**, University of Southern California 2021  
Class: Contemporary International Politics (Undergraduate)

## Papers in Progress

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**Stacked Taxes: Uncovering the Layered Burden on U.S. Consumers** (*Under Review*)

**Sequential Confirmatory Factor Analysis for Small-N Samples** (*Under Review*)

**Can Social Democratic Parties Attract Left-Authoritarian Voters? Evidence from Election Simulations in the Netherlands, 1994–2021** (with Kirill Zhirkov) (*Under Review*)

## **Presentations**

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**Diffusion of Violent Political Protest - Geographic Evidence from Bangladesh** 2025  
Southern Political Science Association Annual Conference, San Juan, Puerto Rico

## **Service**

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**Incoming Ph.D. Student Mentor**, University of Virginia 2024 – Present

**Editorial Assistant**, American Journal of Political Science 2023 – 2025

**Faculty-Class Liaison**, London School of Economics and Political Science 2020 – 2021

## **Awards**

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**Bob Biller Award - Finalist** 2023  
University of Southern California

**Sol Price School of Public Policy Scholarship** 2021  
University of Southern California (\$60,000)

**Undergraduate Research Award** 2015  
University of Manitoba (\$5,000)

## **Coding/Software Skills**

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Python, R, Stata, SQL, L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X, Tableau, Excel, Gorilla, Qualtrics

## **Languages**

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English (Native), French (Basic), Turkish (Beginner)