

Austin L. Wright

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Fields: political economy; development; operations.

DEI: URM; first gen. college grad.

Academic Positions

Assistant Professor *The University of Chicago*, Harris School of Public Policy, Jul. 2016

Faculty Director: DPSS; IPAL; DAC; DSC-GDP IV.

Affiliations: Pearson Institute for the Study and Resolution of Global Conflicts; Becker Friedman Institute (BFI); Empirical Studies of Conflict Project (ESOC).

Honors: Most Outstanding Faculty Member Award, 2022-2023; *Last Lecture Address*, 2021; Most Outstanding Junior Faculty Member Award, 2016-2017.

Visiting Faculty *Yale University*, School of Management, Sep. 2021-Aug. 2022
Leitner Political Economy Group, Sep. 2022-Jun. 2024

Education

Ph.D., Politics *Princeton University*, Jun. 2016

M.A., Politics *Princeton University*, Jun. 2014

Honors: National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship (GRFP); President's Fellowship; Parker D. Handy Prize Fellowship in Public Affairs; Office of Diversity & Inclusion Research Grant; George Kateb Prize for Best Preceptor.

B.S., Communication Studies *The University of Texas at Austin*, Aug. 2009

B.A., Government, Sociology *The University of Texas at Austin*, Jun. 2009

Honors: Dean's Distinguished Graduate (top 12 in college cohort); Phi Beta Kappa; Degree High Honors (2×); Special Department Honors (senior thesis, 3×); Bill and Melinda Gates Millennium Scholarship; Top Prize, ICPSR Undergraduate Research Paper Competition; NFA-NIET National Champion (2×).

Research

Published Papers

- [17] Aid Fragmentation and Corruption. With Travers Child and Yun Xiao. *Review of Economics and Statistics*, forthcoming.
- [16] Courting Civilians during Conflict: Evidence from Taliban Judges in Afghanistan. With Donald Grasse and Renard Sexton. *International Organization*, forthcoming.
- [15] Public Response to Government Alerts Saves Lives During Russian Invasion of Ukraine. With David Van Dijke, Mark Polyak. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, May 2023.
- [14] Rebel Capacity, Intelligence Gathering, and Combat Tactics. With Konstantin Sonin. *American Journal of Political Science*, January 2023.

- [13] Social Alignment and Social Control: Reporting the Taliban in Afghanistan. With Patrick Bergemann. *Sociological Science*, April 2023.
- [12] Information Operations Increase Civilian Security Cooperation. With Konstantin Sonin. *The Economic Journal*, April 2022.
—Coverage: [VoxDev Podcast](#)
- [11] Televising Justice during War. With Andres Uribe and Stephen Stapleton. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, March 2022.
- [10] Unmasking Partisanship: How Polarization Influences Public Responses to Collective Risk. With Maria Milosh, Marc Painter, Konstantin Sonin, and David Van Dijke. *Journal of Public Economics*, December 2021.
—Coverage: [Pandemic Economics Podcast: Uncovering the Politics of Mask Usage](#), [VoxEU CEPR](#), [Washington Post](#), [The Guardian](#)
- [9] Science Skepticism Reduces Compliance with COVID-19 Shelter-in-Place Policies. With Adam Brzezinski, Valentin Kecht, and David Van Dijke. *Nature Human Behavior*, October 2021.
—Coverage: [VoxEU](#)
- [8] Security Transitions. With Thiemo Fetzer, Pedro CL Souza, and Oliver Vanden Eynde. *American Economic Review*, July 2021.
—[American Economic Association Research Highlights Podcast](#)
—Coverage: [VoxEU CEPR](#), [The Guardian](#)
- [7] Poverty and Economic Dislocation Reduce Compliance with COVID-19 Shelter-in-Place Protocols. With Konstantin Sonin, Jesse Driscoll, and Jarnickae Wilson. *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, November 2020.
—Coverage: [NPR](#), [VoxEU](#)
- [6] Insurgent Learning. With Francesco Trebbi, Eric Weese, and Andrew Shaver. *Journal of Political Institutions and Political Economy*, September 2020.
—National Bureau for Economic Research (NBER) Working Paper no. 23475.
- [5] Political and Environmental Risks Influence Migration and Human Smuggling across the Mediterranean Sea. With Kara Ross Camarena, Sarah Claudy, and Jijun Wang. *PLoS One*, July 2020.
- [4] Places to Hide: Terrain, Ethnicity, and Political Violence. With David B. Carter and Andrew Shaver. *Journal of Politics*, October 2019.
- [3] Civilians, Control, and Collaboration during Civil Conflict. With Luke Condra. *International Studies Quarterly*, August 2019.
- [2] Border Walls and Smuggling Spillovers. With Anna Getmansky and Guy Grossman. *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*, July 2019.
—The Pearson Institute (TPI) Discussion Paper no. 41
- [1] The Logic of Insurgent Electoral Violence. With Luke Condra, James Long, and Andrew Shaver. *American Economic Review*, November 2018.
—[American Economic Association Chart of the Week: State Un-building](#)

Circulating papers and funded projects

- [1] Losing on the Home Front? Battlefield Casualties, Media, and Public Support for Foreign Interventions. With Thiemo Fetzer, Pedro CL Souza, Oliver Vanden Eynde. Conditionally accepted: [American Journal of Political Science](#).
—Becker Friedman Institute (BFI) Working Paper no. 2021-52
- [2] Refugee Return and Conflict: Evidence from a Natural Experiment. With Christopher Blair. Revisions requested: [American Economic Review](#).
—Becker Friedman Institute (BFI) Working Paper no. 2021-82
—Runner-up, **Kenneth Boulding Award**, International Studies Association, Peace Studies Section, 2023.
- [3] Economic Competition and Civilian Support for Rebel Reintegration. With Amanda Kennard and Konstantin Sonin. Revisions requested: [International Organization](#).
- [4] Political Economy of Information Provision. With Arda Gitmez and Konstantin Sonin. Revisions requested: [Journal of Politics](#).
—Becker Friedman Institute (BFI) Working Paper no. 2020-68.
- [5] Conceptualizing and Measuring Territorial Control in Civil Wars. With Maria Ballesteros and Christopher Blair. Proposal accepted: [World Politics](#).
- [6] Information Operations, Territorial Control, and Perceptions of Power During Conflict. With Tamar Mitts and Asfandyar Mir.
— **Best Paper Award**, American Political Science Association, Conflict Processes Section, 2023.
- [7] The Economic Origins and Consequences of Territorial Control.
—BFI Data Grant, 2021-2022.
- [8] Isolation and Insurrection: How Partisanship and Political Geography Fueled January 6, 2021. With David Van Dijcke, Konstantin Sonin.
—Becker Friedman Institute (BFI) Working Paper no. 2021-13.
—Coverage: [The Daily Beast](#), [Salon](#)
—Methodological Supplement: Using Mobile Device Traces to Improve Near-Real Time Data Collection During the George Floyd Protests. [\[link\]](#)
- [9] Propaganda during Armed Conflict: Evidence from the Islamic State in Afghanistan. With Travers Child, Kai Gehring, Sarah Langlotz, and Rossella De Sabbatta.
- [10] Civilian Abuse, Counterinsurgent Operations, and Wartime Informing. With Luke Condra, Jacob Shapiro, and Andrew Shaver.
—The Pearson Institute (TPI) Discussion Paper no. 42.
- [11] Economic Shocks and Rebel Tactics.
—Runner-up, **Best Paper Prize**, 2015 UCLA COMPASS Conference on Comparative Politics
—Households in Conflict Network (HiCN) Working Paper no. 232.
- [12] The Politics of Proxy Warfare: Evidence from Ceasefire Violations in the Ukraine. With Natalie Ayers, Bakdaulet Baitan, George Beknazar, Christopher Blair, and Konstantin Sonin.

- [13] Red lines and Negotiables: How Exposure to Wartime Violence Influences Support for Peace Settlements in Ukraine. With Thomas Zeitzoff, Anna Getmansky, Tolga Sinmazdemir, Sasha Jason, Nadiya Kostyuk.
—National Science Foundation (NSF) RAPID grant no. 2226883.
- [14] Corruption and Political Mobilization: Evidence from a Natural Experiment. With Luke Condra.
—Becker Friedman Institute (BFI) Working Paper no. 2021-59.

Policy Papers

- [1] Population Displacement in Afghanistan: Evidence from Mobile Device Activity.
—UNHCR + World Bank + Bison Analytics Research Report on population displacement during the Taliban takeover in 2021.
- [2] Tracking Mask Mandates during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Geet Chawla, Luke Chen, Anthony Farmer, IPAL Lab, and DPSS Lab.
—Becker Friedman Institute (BFI) Working Paper no. 2020-104.
- [3] Attacks on Energy Infrastructure Undermine Democratic Institutions. With Rebecca Lordan-Perret, Peter Burgherr, Matteo Spada and Robert Rosner. *Energy Policy*, September 2019.
- [4] Why do terrorists claim credit? *ICPSR Special Bulletin*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (2009).
- [5] Connecting the Red Corridor: infrastructure development in conflict zones. With Oliver Vanden Eynde, Jamie Hansen-Lewis and Jacob N. Shapiro (*International Growth Centre working paper*).

Invited Talks & Workshops

2024 (Includes Scheduled) Monash University (Economics), London School of Economics (Political Science), UNU-WIDER Mozambique (Data Science), Texas A&M University (Economics), University of Texas at Austin (Political Science) **2023** Federal Office of Civilian Protection (Swiss Government), London School of Economics + University College London + Institute for Fiscal Studies (Economics), University of British Columbia + Berkeley PE Conference (Economics), UC Berkeley (Public Affairs), Georgia Tech (Economics), UC Davis (Political Science), Brown University (Public Affairs), ASSA (Economics of National Security Association), NBER Summer Institute, ESOC **2022** University of British Columbia + Berkeley PE Conference (Economics), Yale University (Political Economy), Harvard University (Political Science), Princeton University (Political Science), Vanderbilt University (Political Science), University of South Carolina (Economics), London School of Economics (Economics), Bocconi University (Economics), NBER Summer Institute, ESOC **2021** Durham University (Political Science), Yale University (Sociology), Washington University in St. Louis (Political Science), Emory University (Political Science), Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM) (Political Science), UC San Diego (Economics), APSA (×2), HiCN 2021: Conflict, Migration, and Displacement, United States Defense Intelligence Agency, ASSA (Economics of National Security Association), NBER Summer Institute, ESOC **2020** (Includes Scheduled/Canceled) Vanderbilt University (Political Science) (~~COVID~~), Washington University in St. Louis (Political Science) (~~COVID~~), London School of Economics (Economics) (~~COVID~~), ESOC (~~COVID~~), Catholic University of Louvain (Economics), New York University (Political Science), UC Berkeley, Cornell University Formal Theory Seminar (Political Science), University of Chicago COVID-19 series (Public Health), University of Chicago Center for Spatial Data Science (Data Science), New York University (Political Economy), NBER (Political Economy), NBER Summer Institute, APSA, Allied Social Science Associations (ASSA) (Economics of National Security Association) **2019** Georgetown University (Economics),

World Bank Research Group (Economics), University of Pennsylvania (Political Science), Columbia University Workshop on Data Science and Conflict, United States Military Academy (Economics), Political Economy in the Chicago Area (PECA), Northwestern University (Political Science), UC Berkeley (Political Science), Ohio State University Workshop on Military History, Facebook Workshop on Online/Offline Hate, World Bank DIME Data Science Conference, University of Zurich (Economics), Paris School of Economics Workshop (Economics of Conflict), Bozeman Security Studies Workshop, ESOC **2018** Princeton University (ESOC Research Seminar), Big Data panel at PeaceCon 2018, Pearson Global Forum, University of Chicago + Becker Friedman Institute Development Day, Paris School of Economics (Economics), American Economic Association (Economics of National Security Association), World Bank (Social, Urban, Rural, and Resilience), Emory University (Political Science), Dartmouth College (Political Science). **2017** American University of Afghanistan (Kabul), University of Chicago Law School, University of Pittsburgh (Public Affairs), National Bureau for Economic Research (NBER) (National Security), NBER Summer Institute ($\times 2$), Higher School of Economics (Moscow), Economics of Crime Workshop, NEWEPS, ESOC ($\times 2$), Emory University (Political Science), Uniformed Services University Center for Global Health Engagement (Public Affairs) **2016** Prince of Songkla University (Public Affairs), Royal Thai Army [Counterinsurgency Division], Thai Department of Special Investigations [US equivalent: Federal Bureau of Investigation], Universidad del Rosario (Economics), International Political Economy Society (IPES), University of Washington Workshop on Voting, American Political Science Association (APSA), Empirical Studies of Conflict (ESOC) Annual Meeting, World Bank + Asia Foundation Workshop on Violence Monitoring **2015** American University (Public Affairs), UC Riverside (Political Science), University of Chicago (Harris), University of Southern California (Public Affairs, Data Science), University of Minnesota (Political Science), Connecticut College (Political Science), University of Iowa (Political Science, Hydrologic Development), Vanderbilt University (Political Science), European Political Science Association (EPSA); UCLA Conference on Comparative Politics; Northeast Workshop in Empirical Political Science (NEWEPS) ($\times 2$) **2014** Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA); International Studies Association (ISA).

Teaching

Instructor, *Statistics for Data Analysis II*, Winter 2017, Winter 2018, Winter 2019, Winter 2020, Winter 2021, Winter 2023 [Harris]

Instructor, *Big Data and Development*, Winter 2023 [Harris]

Instructor, *Data Analysis for International Development*, Autumn 2019, Autumn 2020 [Harris]

Instructor, *Policy Lab on Global Conflict*, Winter 2018, Winter 2019 [Harris]

Instructor, *Insurgency in South and Southeast Asia*, Winter 2017 [Harris]

TA, *Human Rights*, Spring 2014 [Princeton]

TA, *Violent Politics*, Fall 2012 [Princeton]

High School Instructor, *Mathematics* (Teach For America), July 2009 - June 2011

University and Professional Service

Faculty Director

Data and Policy Summer Scholars Program In 2018, I launched and continue to direct DPSS. This program introduces students to elements of the Harris Core—teaching them how to solve basic and intermediate analytical tasks with the tools of causal inference we teach our full-time masters students.

Data Analytics Credential Program In 2021, I launched and continue to direct DAC, a an evening short course in data analytics and open-source coding intended for working professionals.

International Policy Action Lab In 2020, I launched and continue to co-direct IPAL with team members at Peking University. This multi-university program focuses on econometrics and open-source coding. The component I direct is focused on an intensive applied exercise—a Capstone project—where students work in a clinic-like setting on a real policy issue with original data.

DSC-GDP In 2022, Harris launched and I continue to co-direct DSC-GDP (IV = 2023). This custom credential program focuses on policy-making for public servants, advancing evidence-based policy evaluation through coursework in political economy, economics, econometrics, and open-source coding.

Advising

Masters students and their placements

Wenyan Deng (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, PhD in Political Science)

Changwook Ju (Yale University, PhD in Political Science)

Morgan Spangler (UCLA, PhD in Political Science)

Sebastian Hernandez (Yale University, PhD in Political Science and Economics)

Mengxi Sun (University of Pittsburgh, PhD in Economics)

Arvind Ilamaram (University of Chicago, PhD in Comparative Human Development)

Weihong Qi (University of Rochester, PhD in Political Science)

PhD students and their placements

Rebecca Lordan-Perret (PhD Dissertation Advisor, placement: University of Basel, Postdoctoral Researcher on Energy Market Modeling)

Mariana Laverde (Masters Thesis Advisor, placement: Postdoctoral Fellow at Yale University, Assistant Professor at Boston College)

Olga Namen (Coauthor on Dissertation Chapter, placement: Innovations for Poverty Action)

Undergraduate students writing honors theses

Tamar Honig (Global Studies)

Hannah Walter (Economics)

Paul Soltys (Public Policy)

Research assistants and their placements

Maria Ballesteros (Harvard University, PhD in Government)

Arica Schuett (Emory University, PhD in Political Science)

Ryan Teehan (University of Chicago, Masters in Computer Science)

Mariya Milosh (University of Chicago, Masters in Computational Analysis and Public Policy)
Jarnickae Wilson (Harvard University, Business School),
Ewan Rawcliffe (University of Chicago, PhD in Economics),
Bakdaulet Baitan (Bocconi, Masters in Economics, CalTech, PhD in Economics)
George Beknazar-Yuzbashev (Columbia University, PhD in Economics)

University Representative

American Institute of Afghanistan Studies

Journal Reviewer

American Economic Review, American Economic Journal: Economic Policy, American Political Science Review, American Journal of Political Science, The Journal of Politics, Journal of Political Economy, Journal of Conflict Resolution, International Security, World Bank Economic Review, Journal of International Economics, World Politics, Transactions in GIS, Political Research Quarterly, Conflict Management and Peace Science, Journal of Development Economics, Review of Economics and Statistics, American Economic Review Insights, International Studies Quarterly, MIT Press (Economics)

Fellowships & Awards

Graduate

- National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship
- University Nomination, ProQuest, Best dissertation in the social sciences in the past two years
- The Americorps Teaching Award
- Princeton External Fellowship Prize
- Princeton University President's Fellowship
- Parker D. Handy Prize Fellowship in Public Affairs
- Niehaus Center for Global Governance Research Grant

Undergraduate

- Rhodes Scholar Nominee [unanimous selection]
- Dean's Distinguished Graduate [top 12 in College of Liberal Arts]
- Phi Beta Kappa
- Top Prize, ICPSR Undergraduate Research Paper Competition
- The William Jennings Bryan Prize in Government for Best Thesis of the Year
- George H. Mitchell Student Award for Academic Excellence [first non-graduating recipient]
- Audre and Bernard Rapoport & Robert D. King Fellowship
- Presidential Scholar on Dean's List [8×]
- Bill and Melinda Gates Millennium Scholar [full ride]
- Howard and Nancy Terry Scholar [full ride]
- Admiral Bobby R. Inman Scholar
- Hispanic Bar Association Scholar
- Minnie Stevens Piper Scholar
- Emo Jean Cottrell Scholar
- Baumberger Endowment Scholar
- Jesse H. Jones Centennial Scholar
- HACER-McDonald Scholar
- Marion Burke Smith Travel Grant Recipient
- H. Malcolm Macdonald Scholar

Public speaking awards: **NFA-NIET:** *Individual Pentathlon Sweepstakes:* Overall National Runner-Up (2009); *Extemporaneous Speaking* National Champion (2009); National Runner-Up (2008); *Persuasive Speaking* National Champion (2009); *Impromptu Speaking* National Finalist (3rd Place: 2009), Quarter-Finalist (2008); *Rhetorical Criticism* National Semi-Finalist (2008); *Informative Speaking* National Quarter-Finalist (2009); **AFA-NIET:** *Extemporaneous Speaking* National Runner-Up (2008), Finalist (5th Place: 2009), Semi-Finalist (2006), Quarter-Finalist (2007); *Impromptu Speaking* National Runner-Up (2009); *Persuasive Speaking* National Finalist (3rd Place: 2009); *Communication Analysis* National Semi-Finalist (2008)

Technical Languages

Data capture: Python, JavaScript

Data analysis: Stata, R, ArcGIS, QGIS

Typesetting: L^AT_EX, Microsoft Office Suite [certified]

Last updated: May 26, 2024