

James Cragun, *PhD Candidate*

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EDUCATION

University of Oregon

B.S. in Psychology, *Completed June 2013*

Stony Brook University

M.A. in Political Science, *Completed Dec 2015*

Ph.D. in Political Science, *Expected May 2019*

Advanced to candidacy 2017

Subfields: political behavior, quantitative methods

DISSERTATION RESEARCH

How Do You Make an Open-Minded Person? Individual Differences in Selective Exposure to Attitude-Congruent Political Information

Dissertation committee: John Barry Ryan, Milton Lodge, Stanley Feldman

Summary: Prior research has demonstrated that, when seeking political information, people are motivated to selectively seek information that will support their prior beliefs or attitudes rather than information that will challenge them. However, there may be differences in the degree to which individuals engage in selective exposure. I seek to identify dispositional, environmental, or experiential variables that may influence the development of such individual differences. I use simulated information-search tasks on a controversial political issue to measure the relative frequency with which subjects choose to read arguments that are congruent with their prior attitudes on the issue. I investigate the effects of three potentially influential variables: differences in the tendency to rely on automatic or intuitive cognitive process rather than effortful reflection, differences in religious belief or exposure to faith messages, and differences in social environment homogeneity or frequency of disagreement within a social network. I use behavioral and self-report measures of these variables along with experimental priming manipulations and a natural experiment to test how these variables affect performance on the simulated information-search tasks.

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Motivated reasoning, selective exposure, misinformation, judgment & decision making, cognitive biases, scientific and economic reasoning, personality & individual differences, religious cognition, evolutionary psychology, public choice, electoral systems, quantitative methods, agent-based models and computer simulations, pedagogy

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

As course instructor:

- POL 201: Statistical Methods in Political Science, 2016 Fall
- POL 201: Statistical Methods in Political Science, 2017 Spring
- POL 201: Statistical Methods in Political Science, 2017 Fall
- POL 201: Statistical Methods in Political Science, 2018 Spring
- POL 201: Statistical Methods in Political Science, 2019 Spring
- Math camp for incoming PhD students, 2018 Summer

As teaching assistant (with responsibility for weekly discussion section and occasional guest lectures):

- POL 604: Applied Data Analysis 3 (doctoral-level course), 2018 Fall

TEACHING INTERESTS

Statistics and quantitative research methods, experiment design, causal inference, survey research, regression theory and application, maximum likelihood estimation, data visualization, simulations, political psychology, political behavior, American politics, public opinion, ideology, parties, public choice, judgment and decision making, behavioral economics, microeconomics, game theory, agent-based models, evolutionary psychology, personality and individual differences

RESEARCH PAPERS CURRENTLY UNDER REVIEW

- Cragun, James H. “Reflectiveness and Intuitiveness as Sources of Individual Differences in Selective Exposure” (Available on website)

WORKING PAPERS

- Cragun, James H. “Religious Faith Promotes Selective Exposure to Attitude-Congruent Political Information” (Available on website)

RESEARCH WORK IN PROGRESS

- Cragun, James H. “Evolution of One-Shot Cooperation Under Uncertainty: An Agent-Based Model” (Brief summary of results available on request)
- Cragun, James H. “How do you make an open-minded person? The Effect of Social Environment Heterogeneity Among Residents of Student Housing on Selective Exposure in Political Information Seeking” (Currently working on data analysis)
- Cragun, James H. “Frequency of Opportunities for Strategic Voting Under Different Voting Systems: A Computational Simulation” (Brief summary of results available on request)

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- Western Political Science Association 2018 (research paper, solo author)
- Midwest Political Science Association 2018 (research paper, solo author)
- American Political Science Association 2018 (research poster, solo author)
- Western Political Science Association 2019 (research paper, solo author)

AWARDS

- Departmental Teaching Award 2018, Stony Brook University Department of Political Science

GRADUATE COURSEWORK COMPLETED

Methods Courses

- Applied Data Analysis 1, *Yanna Krupnikov* (general course in statistical methods)
- Applied Data Analysis 2, *Michael Peress* (linear models)
- Applied Data Analysis 3, *Michael Peress* (non-linear models, Maximum Likelihood Estimation)
- Experiment Design, *Andy Delton*
- Causal Inference, *Jason Barabas*
- Game Theory, *Martin Steinwand*
- Computational Modeling, *Oleg Smirnov* (especially agent-based models)
- Measurement, Scaling, and Covariance Structure Models, *Stanley Feldman*
- Statistical Analysis of Big Data, *Michael Peress* (including Bayesian statistics, machine learning, nonparametrics, automated text analysis, and ideal point estimation)

Substantive Courses

- American Politics, *John Barry Ryan*
- Public Policy and Political Economy, *Martin Steinwand*
- Political Psychology and Behavior, *Jennifer Jerit*
- Political Ideology, *Stanley Feldman*
- Ecological Rationality, *Andy Delton*
- Social Influence, *Yanna Krupnikov*
- Evolutionary Psychology and Political Decision Making, *Peter DeScioli*

REFERENCES

- John Barry Ryan
Associate Professor, Director of Undergraduate Studies
Stony Brook University
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My dissertation advisor
- Milton Lodge
Professor Emeritus
Stony Brook University
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Member of my dissertation committee
- Stanley Feldman
Professor
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Member of my dissertation committee
- Jason Barabas
Professor
Stony Brook University
jason.barabas@stonybrook.edu
Instructor of a course for which I served as teaching assistant
- Michael Peress
Associate Professor
Stony Brook University
michael.peress@stonybrook.edu
Instructor of several quantitative methods courses I took