

Danny Cowser

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Research Interests

International Relations, Comparative Politics, Local Governance, Immigration/Refugees, Experiments

Education

University of Texas at Austin, Ph.D. Student in Government (Expected Graduation Spring 2027)

- Dissertation: *Experiments Probing Discrimination in Government Responsiveness*

- Committee: Daniel Nielson, Michael Findley, Kenneth Greene, Catherine Weaver, Nathan Jensen

University of Texas at Austin, MA in Government (2024)

University of Wisconsin-Madison, MA in International Relations (2018)

Brigham Young University, BA in Political Science (2017)

Teaching Experience

Instructor, University of Texas at Austin

Applied Research Methods I (Fall 2023, Fall 2024, Fall 2025, Fall 2026)

Applied Research Methods II (Spring 2023, Spring 2024, Spring 2025)

Teaching Assistant, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Introduction to International Relations (Fall 2016, Spring 2017)

Teaching Assistant, University of Texas at Austin

Applied Research Methods (Fall 2022)

Statistical Analysis in Political Science (Summer 2022, Summer 2023, Summer 2024)

Introduction to American Politics (Fall 2021, Spring 2022)

Awards and Fellowships

Research Fellow

Clark Center for Australian and New Zealand Studies, \$10,000 (Spring 2026)

Research Fellow

Innovations for Peace and Development, \$4,500 per semester (August 2021 – Present)

Pre-Dissertation Fellowship

University of Texas at Austin – Government Department, \$3,500 (May 2022)

Department Fellowship

University of Texas at Austin – Government Department, \$7,500 per year (2021 – Present)

IR Summer Fellowship

University of Wisconsin at Madison – IR Research Group, \$3,000 (2018)

Jack and Mary Lois Wheatley Leadership Fellowship - Graduate

Wheatley Institute, \$7,000 (2017)

Publications and Working Papers

Publications

- Toward Simulating Networked Societies with Formal Institutions Using AI Agents – With Michael Richards, Daniel Nielson, and Jacob W. Crandall (Proceedings of AAAI 2026)

Working Papers

- Learning to Participate: English Language Training and Immigrant Women's Engagement with Public Institutions – With Elle Diether, Heartlee L. Harman, Rachel Jeon, Rashid Ahmad, and Joseph Amoah
- Home is Where the Bias Is: Fieldwork and a Field Experiment on Bias in Refugee Housing – With Olgahan Çat (Presented at MPSA 2025)

- Peacebuilding: New Data and Research on the Unintended and Violent Effects of International Peacebuilding – With Michael Findley and Renard Sexton

- Donbas Donation: An Online Transnational Field Experiment on the Social and Political Motivations Leading to Donations for Refugees – With Olgahan Çat, Jiseon Chang, Nivedita Jhunjhunwala, Daniel

Nielson, and Eoin Power (Presented at SPSA 2023)

- Please Answer My Question: A Field Experiment on Government Discrimination based on Citizen Characteristics – With Bethany Albertson, Olgahan Çat, Jiseon Chang, Daniel Nielson, Antonia Vasquez, and Ethan Yoo (Presented at APSA 2024)

- Who's Asking? Co-Ethnicity and Co-Nationality in Helping Strangers: Field Experiments in Ghana, Nigeria and Uganda – With Joseph Amoah, Omogbolahan Bello, Jiseon Chang, Elle Diether, Amada Glazer, Elizabeth McGuire, Chukwuemeka Ohajonu, Byron Xu, and Daniel Nielson (Presented at APSA 2025)

- Unveiling the Veil of Ignorance: A Series of Lab in the Field Experiments Testing Citizen Generated Governance and Their Satisfaction with the Rules that Follow – With Jacob Crandall, Michael Richards, and Daniel Nielson

- Irrational Self Interest: A Survey Experiment Studying the Political Rationale of Firms Allowing a Harmful Trade War with China – With Robert Kubinec, Daniel Nielson, and Jack Zhang

Policy Experience

Development Manager and Research Team Lead, Innovations for Peace and Development Lab (2021 - Present)

- Managed 2+ teams of 4-23 RAs, led weekly meetings, and trained undergraduates in R, AI, and web scraping.

Director of Data Science, Y2 Analytics (2018 - 2021)

- Designed, implemented, analyzed, and reported on dozens of community research projects for municipal governments, including resident satisfaction, policy priorities, public service delivery, and city planning.

- Conducted survey experiments and focus groups for research supporting several successful municipal and school district bond measures, resulting in the allocation of millions of dollars for local public goods, including parks, trails, transportation infrastructure, school facilities, and the construction of new schools.

- Developed automated systems producing polling and electoral reports for active U.S. Senate elections.

- Conducted advanced statistical analysis for public policy and opinion research, including time-series analysis, causal mediation analysis, and structural equation modeling.

- Trained more than 9 interns in R, statistical analysis, data visualization, and research reporting.

Research Assistant, AidData, William and Mary University (May 2016 – August 2016)

- Assisted in implementing a USAID project in Timor-Leste by conducting a field experiment.

- Designed and built surveys to acquire actionable data for government officials.

- Increased transparency by helping officials use allocated resources more effectively.

Skills

Languages: English (Native), Mandarin Chinese (Advanced)

Software: R, Python, LaTeX, SQL, QGIS, STATA, Docker,

References

Daniel L. Nielson

Professor of Government
University of Texas at Austin

Michael Findley

Professor of Government
University of Texas at Austin

Catherine Weaver

Professor of Public Policy
University of Texas at Austin

Kenneth Greene

Professor of Government
University of Texas at Austin