

Jefferson Leal

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EDUCATION

University of Rochester

- Ph.D. Political Science (Expected 2026)
- Fields: Comparative Politics, Political Methodology, Formal Theory (Minor)
 - Concentration: Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning
 - Committee: Anderson Frey (chair), Gretchen Helmke, Alexander Lee
- M.A. Political Science, STEM-certified (2024)

University of São Paulo

- M.A. Political Science (2019)
- Thesis: Partisan Ideology and Personal Income Tax Policymaking in Brazil (*in Portuguese*)
 - Advisor: Marta Arretche
- B.A. Economics (2018)
- B.A. International Relations (2012)

RESEARCH INTERESTS

- Substantive: Comparative Politics, Latin America, Populism, Polarization, Public Policy
- Methodological: Causal Inference, Text-as-Data, Machine Learning, Large Language Models

RESEARCH

Publications

Frey, A.; Leal, J. When Crisis Hits, Does Experience Matter? Evidence from COVID-19 Vaccination. Conditionally accepted at the *British Journal of Political Science*.

Book Chapters

- 2020 Lazzari, E.; Leal, J. Brazilian tax policy under the lens of inequality: Stable, persistent, and durable regressivity. In: Arretche, M.; Marques, E.; Faria, C. (eds.), *The Policies of Politics: Inequality and Inclusion in the Governments of the Workers' Party and the Social Democratic Party*. São Paulo: UNESP Publishing. (*in Portuguese*)
- Volume received Honorable Mention, 6th ABEU Awards (Brazilian Association of University Press Editors)

Working Papers

- Leal, J. Local Right-Wing Populism and Vaccination: Evidence from the COVID-19 Pandemic in Brazil.
- Leal, J. The Negative Ideological Reverse Coattail Effect: Reversing Democratic Backsliding in Brazil.
- Leal, J. Why Do Citizens Support Non-Democratic Ideas? Evidence from Latin America.

Work in Progress

Leal, J. Transfer Learning with Text Embeddings.

Frey, A.; Caetano, G.; Caetano, C.; Leal, J. Treatment Effects with a Bunching Design in Politics: Evidence from Targeted Transfers.

Frey, A.; Leal, J. Ideological Alignment and Local Policy Provision: Public Security Spending in Brazil.

Policy Reports

2020 Prates, I.; Barbosa, R.; Leal, J. Black men and black women are the most vulnerable in the crisis; however, a “new vulnerable” group emerges: white men and white women in non-essential services. Bulletin No. 3. Solidary Research Network.

2020 Prates, I.; Barbosa, R.; Leal, J. et al. Emergency benefit providing R\$600 needs to continue and could be funded by emergency contribution on high incomes. Bulletin No. 8. Solidary Research Network.

Research Assistantships

2026 Research Assistant to Gretchen Helmke, University of Rochester
Code review and methodological audit of conjoint experiment implementation.

2022–26 Research Assistant to Anderson Frey, University of Rochester
Web scraping, HPC-based data processing, and text-based measurement design.

2024–25 Research Assistant to Bonnie Meguid, University of Rochester
Human coding of femonationalism in European parliamentary speech corpora.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

2025 Society for Political Methodology Annual Meeting (PolMeth).

2024 PolMeth; Latin American Political Methodology Meeting (Latin American PolMeth);
Midwest Political Science Association Annual Conference (MPSA); Summer Institute in
Computational Social Science (SICSS) Rochester.

2023 PolMeth; American Political Science Association Annual Meeting (APSA).

2021 MPSA.

GRANTS AND AWARDS

Awards

2024 Best Teaching Assistant in Political Science, University of Rochester

2024 Best Third Year Paper in Political Science, University of Rochester

2024 Best Paper, Summer Institute in Computational Social Science, Rochester

2017 3rd Best Poster, 7th IPSA São Paulo Summer School in Methods

Scholarships

- 2023–24 W. Allen Wallis Institute of Political Economy Fellowship, University of Rochester
- 2016–18 Master's Fellowship (CAPES), Brazilian Ministry of Education
- 2015 Undergraduate Research Assistantship, University of São Paulo, Department of Economics

PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYMENT

Academic Experience

- 2017–21 Lecturer, Universidade Paulista

Non-Academic Experience

- 2011–13 Planning and Logistics Analyst, Rockwell Automation Brazil
Inventory and distribution planning and statistical forecasting for Brazil, Chile, and Argentina.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- 2025–26 ICPSR Summer Program in Quantitative Methods, Teaching Assistant
- Matrix Algebra, Calculus, and Probability (Grad.), Prof. Tim McDaniel
 - Causal Inference II (Grad.), Prof. Sebastian Calonico and Prof. Nicolás Idrobo
- 2023–25 University of Rochester, Teaching Assistant
- PSCI 389, Senior Honors Seminar (Undergrad.), Prof. Casey Petroff
 - PSCI 102, Intro. to International Political Economy (Undergrad.), Prof. Randall Stone
 - PSCI 101, Intro. to Comparative Politics (Undergrad.), Prof. Bonnie Meguid
- 2018–21 Universidade Paulista, Brazil, Instructor of Record
- Economics and International Politics (Undergrad.)
 - Geopolitics and Global Markets (Undergrad.)
 - International Business (Undergrad.)
 - Microeconomics I (Undergrad.)
 - Microeconomics II (Undergrad.)
 - Intro. to Statistics (Undergrad.)
- 2020 IPSA São Paulo Summer School in Methods, Teaching Assistant
- Survey Design (Grad.), Prof. Bruno Cautrès
 - Survey Analysis (Grad.), Prof. Bruno Cautrès
- 2018 University of São Paulo, Political Science Department, Teaching Assistant
- Quantitative Methods for Social Sciences (Grad.), Prof. Glauco Peres

AFFILIATIONS & SERVICE

- 2025 Co-organizer, Summer Institute in Computational Social Science (SICSS), University of Rochester
- 2023–24 President, International Student and Scholar Advisory Board (ISSAB), University of Rochester
- 2022–23 Chair of Communication, ISSAB, University of Rochester

2016–20 Junior Researcher, Center for Metropolitan Studies
2016–20 Member, Inequalities Studies Group, University of São Paulo

COMPUTATIONAL AND QUANTITATIVE SKILLS

- Programming and Software: R, Python, Stata, MATLAB, L^AT_EX, GeoDa
- Tools and Skills: SLURM, Claude Code, Codex, Web Scraping
- Quantitative Methods: Causal Inference, Survey Design and Analysis, Machine Learning, Deep Learning, Natural Language Processing, Spatial Analysis

ADDITIONAL TRAINING

2019 Graduate Certificate in Legislative Politics and Public Policy, School of Government Administration and Accounting of São Paulo

2019 Survey Analysis, Design, and Experiments, IPSA-USP Summer School

2018 Modeling Dynamics in Space and Time, IPSA-USP Summer School

2017 Advanced Issues in Multi-Method Research: Integrating Case Studies and Contemporary Methods for Causal Inference, IPSA-USP Summer School

2016 Summer Policy Workshop, São Paulo City Hall

LANGUAGES

- English: fluent (speaking, reading, writing)
- Spanish: fluent (speaking, reading, writing)
- Portuguese: native (speaking, reading, writing)
- French: advanced (reading, writing); intermediate (speaking)

REFERENCES

Anderson Frey

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Alexander Lee

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Gretchen Helmke

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Department of Political Science
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